

Re-Inventing Christianity

As A Socially Sustainable Christian Religion

By Daniel Raphael, PhD

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22.4 – Sustainable Christianity

5/20/2017 – 17:51

Words: 35,720

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IIRP

Second Reformation Press

is an imprint of

Daniel Raphael Consulting and Publishing
P.O. Box 2408, Evergreen, Colorado 80537 USA

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¹ Raphael, Daniel. *ORGANIC MORALITY, Answering the Critically Important Moral Questions of the 3rd Millennium.*
(An unpublished, 91 page manuscript available as a PDF via email from the author.)

Preface

Very few books come into existence solely by the efforts of the author. This book is no exception as it borrows very heavily from *What Was God Thinking?!* published in 2002. It contains my acknowledgements which remain fully intact for this book.

From 2002 to the present the thoughts and wisdom of social sustainability² gave me an opportunity to share what I had learned. One concept seemed to lead to another, and another, followed by merging them into practical guidance for individuals, families, communities, and whole societies.

It didn't dawn on me until very recently that I could marry the concepts of a "Loving-God Theology" with the basic concepts of social sustainability to create this book. What was needed to make it a truly viable book was my recent article, "Epigenesis and Clinics for Sustainable Families — Catalysts for Transgenerational Culture Change."

What brings all of these concepts into a holism are the seven values that God embedded in our DNA during our species' creation. Those seven values provide the motivation for our species to grow into its potential collectively and individually. They also define our species as being humane, capable of empathy, compassion, and a generalized "Love" of all others. We were created that way. Importantly, they become the criteria for validating a Loving-God Theology as the design criteria to re-invent Christianity as a socially sustainable Christian church.



² "Social Sustainability" has been an ongoing topic of my writing since 2006 to address various aspects of social, political, and economic stability and sustainability. See the author's BIO for published and unpublished materials.

Specifically, social sustainability is defined by the author as the ability of a society to be self-sustaining indefinitely..., for 5 years, 50 years, 250 years, 500 years and more because of the intention for its existence and the design of its functions,

Introduction

Titling the book could have taken several courses including “Fixing Christianity,” “Reforming Christianity,” and several others. Traditional Christian churches are not the primary problem that needs healing. The problem that continues to plague Christianity has its roots in Pauline Theology. The saving grace of Pauline Theology when it was developed was its congruence with the Hebrew concepts of God — it kept the faithful together, which was what was needed for the times. “Reforming Christianity” was tried by Martin Luther in 1517, and brought about internal policy changes to the Catholic Church, but it did not address the roots of Christianity’s fundamental problem.

There really is no “fixing” Pauline Theology as it is deeply flawed, illogical, unreasonable, and irrational. It upholds the ancient Hebrew description of God as a wrathful, jealous, vengeful god that has to be appeased, even with the sacrifice of his Son, according to Paul’s theology. Today, people are too educated, too steeped in the logic of code-writing and software operations to accept such an illogical, self-defeating definition of God.

What is needed is the re-invention of Christianity beginning with overturning Pauline Theology and replacing it with a Loving-God Theology. Once that is completed, the task is to re-invent the Christian church, which includes Catholic, Protestant, and other Christian based religions. The work ahead is to correct the religion while also reinventing the church organization. Those two elements are distinctly different and must be dealt with separately to make both become sustainable into the future.

Because the relationship of the individual with their creator has the potential of becoming infinite in duration, from this lifetime to an afterlife of billions of years, the functionality of the church organization needs to be as self-sustaining as possible. My own observation of the attitudes of church members concerning the highly fallible nature of church organizations, particularly their management,

compared to the eternity of God has left millions of believers with a sour taste in their mouth for the Christian religion.

The book is divided into three parts:

In **Part I, Three Beliefs**, we begin the discussion based on three beliefs about God: 1) God exists; 2) There is only one God; 3) God is eternal. Everything that follows emanates from these three statements of belief. They provide the basis for coming to a clear understanding about God, what God is, what God is not, and how to determine who is responsible for “good things” and “bad things” in our life; and why God does not act in some occasions. Our relationship with God will not make much sense to us until we have discovered some of the probable reasons that existed *before creation* that motivated God to create the universe. This is directly connected to the relationship between God and Jesus and to us.

In **Part II, A Socially Sustainable God**, we begin to examine in more detail the nature of God: “Good God” or “Bad God”? If God is solely a God of love and benevolence, what does that do to the doctrines of traditional Pauline Christianity? This topic gets a thorough examination of sacrifice, atonement, and redemption.

In **Part III, A Socially Sustainable Christian Religion**, begins in Chapter 7 with the necessary discussion of the origin of religions and churches in a question and answer format; and God’s relationship to churches.

With the removal of Pauline Theology and its replacement with a Loving-God Theology, the discussion moves toward re-inventing the Christian church organization. As far as my readings of church history have taken me, it seems fairly obvious that an organization development plan was never used to develop an integrated business structure for the church organization. It came into existence without a defined vision statement, intention statement, operational philosophy, mission, or measurable objectives.

If this new religion is to survive, how should the church organization be designed so that it fully supports that a socially sustainable Christian religion without becoming enmeshed for its own sake? In keeping with the values God embedded into our DNA to motivate us to evolve and grow into our personal,

social, and spiritual potential, these values must also be embedded into the organizational elements of the church organization.

The work of re-inventing the Christian church organization is to design it to become as socially sustainable as possible, to give it the internal processes necessary to carry it forward for many centuries and millennia, i.e., to emulate as closely as possible the longevity of our Creator. One of the primary necessities is to install a “Type II learning process” into the organizational structure of the church organization, so that the church begins to learn from its mistakes in order to become more sustainable.

Perhaps the reason the church has not learned from its mistakes is its assumption of its infallibility by being so closely associated with the religion. Operationally, it is inappropriate to identify one with the other, particularly with the church leader who too conveniently has been the person who represents both the religion and the organization.

Chapter 9 has the chore of filling the yawning gap with the Christian religion OF Jesus where the Pauline Christian religion was removed. Here we begin the discussion of the connection between the values God embedded in the DNA of our species, and the previously unexamined values that are deeply invested in the religion OF Jesus. When we discover this deep connection, we will come to realize that these values give this new Christian religion the capability of a similarly long lived sustainability as our species.



I

Three Beliefs

Introduction

To design a holistically consistent God-related religion requires us to logically and rationally explain the chain of events beginning *before the creation of the universe* to the present time. This is the most definitive place to start.

The following pages describe a "Pre-Creation Theology" — a way of thinking about the universe and all human-related activities — beginning where The Creator began, before creation. Any theology that has its beginnings after creation, in early Hebrew times or the life and death of Jesus, for example, has blind assumptions about God, God's situation before creation, creation, and the universe. These blind assumptions cause great difficulties for contemporary Christians having to explain contentious social, religious, moral, and ethical issues. By beginning before creation we will leave no era unexamined.

The Pre-Creation Theology begins with God in the era before creation and then, in light of those explanations, interprets the events of human activity, including the life and death of Jesus. Historic Judeo-Christian theologies, however, have taken on this task in reverse order — they began with an understanding of the historical events of the Hebrew people and the life and death of Jesus and then tried to describe the character and nature of God. Far greater consistency will occur when we begin by trying to understand God's situation before creation, and use that new understanding to explain all events that follow.

If by some way we were able to witness and observe all that took place before creation to the present time, the development of the universe and

God's actions and lack thereof would make sense to us. But because we are latecomers in the universe, (scientists tell us that we are about 13 billion years too late!), we do not have any record of what actually occurred. Because of that, we must ask questions that place us at that "time" and strive to answer them, much as Detective Sherlock Holmes would do to unravel a complicated case. Some questions will yield great wealth of knowledge while others will yield little. The important thing is to ask questions and strive to answer them.

Let us begin by asking a series of important questions.

Why did The Creator create the universe if The Creator was complete and whole before creation?

What does the universe give God that God could not get without it?

Is there a limit and, if so, what is it that limits The Creator's ability to experience the universe?

Why did The Creator create imperfect, short-lived, material human beings?

What is the role of individuals in their relationship to The Creator and the reasons God created them and the universe?

What is God's relationship to the universe?

Am I supposed to take the creation of the universe personally?

What is God's relationship to me?

What is my relationship to God?

What is my relationship to the universe?

Is there some sort of agenda or purpose for my life?

Does God have a plan for my life? If so, what is it?!

These may sound like very weighty and tedious questions to answer, but necessary to help us understand what our experience in the universe is all about: Existence is a personal experience for The Creator and for The Creator's human children. It becomes even more personal and intimate when we consciously invite The Creator to share in our experiences of living.

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As you can see, I have already jumped ahead of myself. We tend to take for granted that experience is concomitant to existence. Yet, we have not begun the explanation of experience and its purpose for The Creator. In this treatise, we must begin at that point.



1

Three Beliefs

All religions are based on certain beliefs that cannot be proven. We simply accept them as true. Being beliefs, they are what separate the secular from the non-secular. No amount of empiricism will ever prove there is a God or that God created the universe.

The following three beliefs provide the bedrock upon which God-centered religions are built, and that provide the matrix for the holism of Christianity.

God exists.

There is only one God.

God is eternal.

EXPANSION OF FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS —

God exists. God's existence and presence are not dependent upon those who conceive of It. God is, exists, and is universally present whether people think of God as existing or not. God does not exist solely because people think of God.

Centuries ago several philosophers came to a conclusion that if people *thought* of God, God could exist, and that if they did not think of God, then God would not exist. Both statements are silly because if that were the case, then the universe could not have come into existence until after God was thought of: God, who created the universe, and the person who thought of God. So, we say God's existence and presence are not dependent upon those who conceive of It.

God is without gender. Since God is eternal* and there is only one God, God was not brought into existence by any other power or being. God has no gender or reproductive system, either to produce or create other beings, or as a remnant of Its existence. God, therefore, is neither "he" nor "she," but more accurately an "it," an "it" that more perfectly combines the attributes of father and mother without the biological and social hassles of hormones and sex organs. Using "He," "Him," and "His" convey Jesus' relationship to the fatherly attributes of God. The male gender pronouns are metaphors that Jesus used intentionally so that we could understand our personal relationship with our Creator-parent.

*** Eternal means without beginning or end. It is outside the dimension of time.** Infinite, on the other hand, means a beginning with no ending and is time-dependent.

God is without form. Because God was not created and did not evolve, God does not have a body. God is without form.

God is pure will. Just as God has will, so do we. Our will has energy that emanates from within us, yet it is without form. Many aspects of ourselves exist without form, yet we *know* with certainty they exist. God is a fully developed being and has no need of form in the physical sense, but exists as a spiritual being. In order to create the universe, God must be pure will and without form.

God is spirit. No form, no substance, just spirit as far as we can understand what spirit is from our limited perspective. God is spirit that is *will* and capable of creation and much more. Without form, God can *will* to be anywhere as a whole or a fragment. (It is beyond the scope of this text to discuss whether material matter is God manifested in material form, or whether God is "in" matter.)

God existed before creation. We can say this as a fact, dependent upon the third original statement of belief, "God is eternal." Before creation, God existed in the Eternal NOW, when there was no "when," where there was no "where." God existed in the nothingness that was only God — all undeveloped potential — that leads us to a very ponderable situation. When we think of a state of existence before creation, we must realize that there was NOTHING. Nothing, except God.

It boggles the mind, doesn't it, to think that before time there was absolutely nothing: No universes, no galaxies, no stars, no sun, no planets, no moon, and no air. Nothing, not even time or space. There was no expanse of the universe. No then, no now, no future. No place, no here, no there. Only God. Only God in the Eternal NOW, in the Eternal HERE. All the potential of the universe existed in God: The totality of all potential that would be material and invisible, temporal and spiritual, existent and undeveloped potential.

God created the universe. Not to worry whether it was created by fiat in 6 days or by evolution over the eons. It does not seem relevant to know whether God created the universe in 6 billionths of a second, 6 days, or 60 billion years. Creation of the universe is not a closed-end event, but continues on and is a timeless phenomenon.

DISCUSSION —

From our first statement of belief, God exists, and from our observation of the universe around us, we draw the belief-conclusion that God created the universe. That is, we believe in God. We believe the universe exists. We believe God created all of it, including all the spiritual beings on all spiritual planes; all physical and material aspects known and unknown to us; and all other aspects of the four dimensions and all other dimensions known and unknown to us.

The universe is an expression of God, an expression of God's will. Looking out upon the universe, what we see is an impressive, grand, and generous experience. Looking upon the universe in this world, whether we see clouds, flowers, or personalities, is also a generous experience. Looking within, again viewing what little we can, and understanding even less, at DNA molecules, we are overwhelmed by the care and thoughtfulness of these creations and developments of the original creation. These narrow views are but small fragments of the magnificent and thoughtful expressions of the nature of God. If we could view all dimensions of time and all the facets of physical and spiritual creation at once, how would we feel? Surely, we would be filled with awe and great humility to be a part of this creation.

We are extensions of God's power when we will to create. Here, at this juncture of our existence, we come face to face with the spiritual responsibilities of our will to create: To treat, care, and nurture God's manifold creation, including our planet, Earth, as well as we care and nurture the products of our own creation whether a wall painting, a garden, a child, a house design and blue prints, or a poem. Doing so, we create sacred relationships with all else around us, whether with our planet Earth or with other people. Our attitude is the same for both. We are in awe of what is created; we feel immensely humble in comparison to what God has created; and we are immensely humble for being able to create, and for what we have created.

Our will to create is an exact image of God's will to create with the same proportional capability for being a creator. The implications of this statement are truly profound as they apply to our sacred relationship to this planet and each individual on it. That potential capability exists within each of us. *We can more fully unlock that potential when our values and beliefs about God are in full alignment with God's true nature.* Then we can see God's true nature in us —our true nature!

In the moments just prior to creating something, what existed before we *willed* to create? Nothing. By examining the non-event before creation we can gain a better idea of what God's situation was like before God willed the universe into existence.

How can anyone explain how the universe came into existence? Probably the best we can do is to draw a parallel between God willing the creation of the universe into existence and us willing one of our thoughts into existence. There exist no equivalents to measure the energy that was necessary to bring the universe into existence, or the energy to will the creation of one of our thoughts. To think is the easiest and most effortless act of creativity, and I suspect that God created the universe as easily as having a thought. This parallel provides us with a fairly accurate estimate of the relative difference of magnitude between our power and authority, and God's. As we explore the idea of an unlimited, all-powerful, eternal, all-knowing being, The Creator and sustainer of the Grand Universe, the more interesting and complete our concepts and understanding of God will become. Remember, God was and is in sacred relationship with Himself, and extends that relationship to the universe and all its inhabitants.

God created time. When God created the universe, the four dimensions were created. This is the starting point of chronology, sequences of events, developmental initiations, and the infinite perspective. We say "in the beginning" and this is when time began.

Since God created the temporal dimension of time, God existed before time. Having created time, God can function within, or outside, the dimension of time and the universe. The Creator's usual habitat is outside the dimension of time, since time is limiting and linear. Since God exists in eternity, a "place" with no time, with no past or future, God's presence exists in the Eternal NOW.

God is present everywhere. That is, God can be in one location, or two, or the extent of all creation at once. God is everywhere God *wills* to be. God, being in the Eternal NOW, can be anywhere or everywhere at once. Because God lives in the Eternal NOW outside of time, God can be present anywhere. If it doesn't take any time to go anywhere, The Creator can be everywhere at once!

God is all-knowing. God encompasses the sum of all *existent* knowledge. Being in the Eternal NOW of the past, present, and future, and able to be everywhere at once, God is aware of all. God knows everything. Being outside the continuum of time, God knows everything whether in time or out of time, in space or out of space, temporal or spiritual. God created the universe and understands and knows the universe, its existence, and its operation. God knows all there is to know of the *existent* universe.

God is all-powerful. From God The Creator, all was created. All energy before creation was contained in The Creator's being, and God's power was not diminished one erg by bringing creation into existence. (An erg is far less energy than is required to snap your finger and thumb together.) Just as one thought, or an effort to will a thought, does not diminish our power and energy, God's power and energy was not diminished by the act of Creation or any later acts of will.

Though the physical universe is the most immediate and immense manifestation of energy visibly evident to us, physical objects are only a small portion of the total sum of energy that exists in the universe. There exist many forms of non-visible energy that we have no way of measuring. Astrophysicists tell us there are vast cubic light years of

tenuous clouds of nearly invisible hydrogen; and immense amounts of "dark matter." How many subatomic particles are there in the universe? And how many galaxies would they make? Very possibly, there are whole galaxies of invisible forms of energy. It is apparent that energy is everywhere and fills all of what we call "empty" space.

And God created it all! That was and is the most powerful act ever. It follows, then, that God is all-powerful, and can do anything God *wills* to do that is consistent with Its nature. We do not know of any limit to God's capability, except as God wills to limit Itself. We can say, therefore, that God is all-powerful and without limit to what God can do.

Just as an architect and contractor can conceive of and build a home or subdivision, those acts of construction do not diminish their creative potential. Architects can still conceive of many more homes and subdivisions. As humans, the only limitation to what we can bring into being is whether we have the resources and time to build what we conceive. If we had the unlimited resources and unlimited time, as God has, and an infinite expanse of three-dimensional space, we too could build houses until we died. But God, who exists outside the dimension of time, has no such limitation. God's only limitation is that which God places upon Its will. God is therefore unlimited in power.

God is whole. The universe is a form of God's expression, yet God is complete without the universe. Creating the universe did not take anything from God. Just as thinking does not take anything from us, will and creation do not take anything from God. God was whole before creation and remains whole. God is intact and undivided. God is not in need of anything to be or to become whole.

God is complete. That is, God is not in need of anything, anyone, or any state of being to sustain Its existence. There is no symbiotic relationship between God and that which God created for God to be complete. Further, God is not flawed and has no need to prey upon that which God brought into existence. God is self-sustaining in sole existence.

The Divine Fragment of God within each of us provides God with the *experiential process* of living. When we join with God in this experience, we are provided with the possibility of eventually experiencing perfection of being, as God does. This is not a symbiotic relationship that enables the

achievement of completeness, but a relationship that allows each partner to experience the process of living and the achievement of perfection in new ways.

God is perfect. We know this is so from several perspectives. God exists in eternity. If God were not perfect, God would be imperfect, flawed, and susceptible to degeneration and eventual death. God would not exist. The universe would not exist.

Implicit in the statement, "God is eternal," is that God is perfect. Though the three statements, "God is whole," "God is complete," and "God is perfect," are closely related, the first two were presented first to lead our logic to the point where we understand that God is perfect, too. All have their proofs within our original three statements of belief.

Further, we logically know that since God exists in eternity, outside time, God would be aware of the beginning of the universe and any possible "endings" of it. Knowing this, God would have been aware of any flaws before they began and would have eliminated any flawed processes. Time-bound creatures do not have this eternal advantage to know and feel with assurance that there are no flaws in the function of the universe.

Human observations of the universe are very limited and our recorded history of it is very, very brief. However, because the universe is so huge and so old, if there were any mechanical or physical flaws inherent in its design, they would have developed over the eons and be in evidence around us.

Rather than chaos, we see order in the universe. And it is lasting and self-perpetuating in its unfolding. What we see is benevolent, humane, and even magnanimous when we appreciate the abundance around us. It is divine! There is beauty in the appearance of a confusion of evidence. Picture a colorful butterfly in the warm sun — iridescent segments on the wings of a creature that appears to float effortlessly in the air and on the tides of breezes — spectacular, incredibly beautiful, and good.

The terms "good" and "beauty" are our interpretations and conclusions of what we see in the universe. That is, we see the universe and how it operates, and perceive it as a "good" place to live, with "beautiful" experiences around us. If the universe were not this way, we would as

easily say that the universe is cruel and ugly. We interpret processes that are self-sustaining, self-perpetuating, and benevolent as "good." Processes such as these, which continue into infinity or which originate in eternity must, then, be perfect. If God were not perfect, the universe would exhibit that imperfection and pervade all creation.

The universe is the canvas of God's artwork. We know the ability and depth of an artist by what he or she produces, yet we do not know what unfathomed and unproduced works yet lie within that artist's creativity. So, too, with God, as far as we can see of the universe. It is beautiful. It works. It is without evidence of inherent self-defeating flaws. This is the outward evidence of God. It is the outward evidence of what God is capable. Yet, the universe does not express all the capability of God's potential.

With God's unlimited power, existence outside the confines of time, and an unlimited creative potential, The Creator appears to have only begun to express Itself!

God has only one nature. When people believe in a god with two natures, they lead themselves into deception as to the true nature of God. God cannot be both loving and spiteful, loving and resentful, loving and jealous, loving and vengeful, constant and inconstant, consistent and inconsistent. God is not divided in nature or at odds with Itself.

Looking at it another way, God is not capricious, impulsive, whimsical, fickle, inconsistent, inconstant, or imperfect. God cannot be perfect and imperfect, impulsive and thoughtful, fickle and true because such inconsistencies are contrary to the oneness of an eternal, creative nature, contrary to becoming, to unfoldment, to the eternal expression of all-potential. Creation would have collapsed if God's nature were conflicting or changeable. It is a reasonable conclusion to know that God has only one nature.

God has only one nature, perfect and loving, because all the other paths of logic and reason lead us to places that end. The path of one-nature, wholeness, leads us unendingly toward a greater and more complete revelation of what God is. The opposite of love, which is hate, leads to limitation, finite and diminishing growth, and contraction of self. God is not just a little bit evil, sinful, or bad. Any inconsistency in the nature of

God would have become magnified over the eons of time since the beginning of creation and inherent in the act of creation. Any blemish of imperfection would have become as evident as the development of rot from one small bit of imperfection in one apple in a barrel of apples, to the point where the whole barrel, over time, becomes rotten and maggot infested.

If we could view the universe, this world, without the errant behavior of self-willed individuals, we would see a universe that is ultimately and absolutely good. So, where does the negative and evil that we see come from? From God? No, it is from self-willed, errant people. What errant people will to do is not a reflection of The Creator's will. We can say then that God's nature is not dualistic, nor is the universe. The conclusion that "forces of light" and "forces of evil" exist is simply a conclusion made from observations of human behavior. God and the universe are only good, only benevolent, and universally generous. When we align our will with the loving energy of God, we begin to see and feel the rightness of reality.

God is good. If we disregard the ill-behaved manners of self-willed people, some of whom seem to muck up this universal pattern of beauty, the universe as a whole is one of order, inherent logic, and an ultimate expression of greater reason and wisdom. It is good — another value judgment — and is a reflection of its creator. All that God created is good — therefore God is good.

God is love. We see that, except for the behavior of self-willed creatures, the universe is good — infinitely good and perfect in its operation — a reflection of its creator. Since God is The Creator of all that is good, God is the ultimate pattern of creation, the ultimate good, which we would term ultimate goodness, or "loving." God, who created the entire universe, did so with Its will. Creation, then, is an act of positive action, a positive expression of will. When God expresses Its will, God does so with ultimate goodness, an expression of love. Love is the expression of God's will. Love is God's will, expressed. Therefore, God's nature is loving.

Succinctly, God is love. God created, and creates everything as a loving impulse. That which is love in the universe stems from God. That which is not-loving in the universe stems from the free will accorded to man.

Martin Luther King, Jr. had much to say about the power of love and the ends that love can bring, in his sermon, "Loving Your Enemy." "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity. By its very nature hate destroys and tears down; by its very nature, love creates and builds up...." ("Strength To Love," 1963: 521.)

Taking Dr. King's advice, when we focus our intent and decisions for living upon love, we move out of the simplistic, circular logic of dualistic thinking. Doing so we can move forward into a new development in our relationship with God: As partner and co-creator — an alliance with God that more fully supports our responsibilities to aid the healing of our planet and ourselves — to learn to love more completely.

We will have no confusion about our relationship to others when we understand clearly that our relationship to God has only one nature. When we feel safe in God's universe and we feel safe in our relationship with God, then we can trust God and ourselves to act and make decisions that move us into loving, sacred relationships.

WHAT GOD IS NOT —

To gain a further perspective of what God is, it is also important to understand what God isn't. We could make a list of what God is not that could go on *ad infinitum*, but some more important aspects of what God isn't may be helpful to develop a more realistic perspective of God. God isn't human. We have "humanized" God, but God is not human. God is God. The Creator is perfect and unwavering. We have anthropomorphized God by creating a god in our own image with the weaknesses of human nature. But that is an incomplete and inaccurate picture of God.

For those who had inadequate or absent father figures during their formative years, it is very UNfortunate that God has been cast as a male — a father figure living in the clouds at the end of an infinitely tall ladder.

This has set up certain expectations for us that are both positive and negative. We have set ourselves up for expectations of our Heavenly Parent similarly as our earthly father role model. That is an unfortunate parallel for many of us because it hampers and even inhibits a healthy, loving relationship with God. While the highest combined role of a human father and mother is far less than the wonderfully loving nature of our heavenly Parent, it does portray a fair approximation of God's nature: An unqualifiedly loving, benevolent, and just Father-Mother-Creator.

If we see God without form or substance, without gender or emotion, without race or creed, then we have come a long way toward seeing God as The Creator really is. But how can The First Great Source and Center of the universe be a God of love, and yet be without emotion? The answer lies in our interpretation of God's benevolence. We interpret God's unconditional giving, sharing, watch-care, and universal benevolence as love.

Try looking at it through this example: Suppose you had a neighbor you never met and didn't ever see, but whose presence was very evident in many intriguing ways. Suppose she quietly planted flower bulbs and seeds in the fall, which in the spring surprised you with blooming flowers. Suppose she quietly arranged it so that you got the right job that helped you fulfill your family's needs. Suppose she was able to put you into situations where you had to grow and though the times were rough you were glad you had gone through them because you had grown. And suppose she was able to mysteriously answer your sincere requests that were in keeping with your highest good. If you had a neighbor like that, you would interpret his or her actions as "loving." Think of God as a neighbor who is eternally, universally, unconditionally, and unlimitingly generous and "good." We interpret God's unlimited and unconditional benevolent behavior toward us as "loving."

THE LIMITATIONS OF GOD, AND OUR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY —

Nothing limits God but God, Itself. If we argue that The Creator can do anything and create anything, then we must also include in that argument that God can also set limits on what It does with Its power and authority.

Succinctly, to deny the possibility of God's volitional self-limitation would amount to a denial of the concept of God's volitional absoluteness.

God has defined Itself to be of one nature — PERFECTION. God is all powerful, all-knowing, unchanging, eternal — complete perfection — perfect in every way. God does not act against Its own nature, because doing and being less would be contrary to Its perfection. Consistent with God's nature, however, God has the power and authority to will to do anything.

We can apply this same logic to our own lives. "Why would we want to express and be less than the greatest of our potential?" Why, indeed? Why would we express and be less than the potential of goodness that we are capable of? These are not rhetorical questions, but questions whose answers are pregnant with hope and potential. Only by aligning with and exercising the innate God-potential within us can we discover ways to overcome difficulties in our relationship with others and particularly with ourselves.

God limits Itself where self-will of humans occurs. God has not, does not, and will not violate the initiative of our self. Our self-will is an inviolable aspect in God's relationship to creatures that have will. This is self-evident when we examine the self-destructive decisions we make and God does not interfere.

We make millions upon millions of decisions each day, yet none is transgressed by God or Its spiritual legions. Why? Because, if God began changing the outcome of our decisions and actions, several things could occur: We would wise up and realize that someone (God) was changing the outcome of our decisions; we would defer deciding what to do in favor of God making the right decision the first time; we would not give careful thought to our decisions knowing that God would intervene and make it right for us; we would not learn — gain in wisdom — from our decisions; we would not gain in spiritual insight and growth to make better decisions as we live out our lives. By making better decisions, our souls grow from the challenges presented to us in our lifetimes, and this enhances our potential to become survivors in the duration of our ascendant spiritual career.

Total freedom — total responsibility. Without total freedom and total responsibility for our self-will decisions, the potential for complete, fulfilling growth in the infinity of time of our lives would be denied to us. God limits Himself in our lives to provide us with the possibility to express and fulfill the totality of our potential on all levels of our being, just as God does.

Many people have a generalized anxiety and fear about God's relationship to them. Their fear and anxiety is usually due to their old beliefs that, because God created the universe and all that is in it, God is responsible for all of it and what happens in it. They fear that God will unilaterally judge them and take action according to all their errors. This is simply archaic thinking.

Ultimately, with total freedom, *we* are totally responsible for our actions, not God. There is no need for fear or anxiety on our part concerning God's intentions or actions for us. This being so, the real source of our anxiety becomes our confidence or lack thereof in our own ability to lead our lives as responsible citizens on this planet and in the universe. There is much to fear, but not God. God has generously given us all the necessary attributes of Himself, particularly self-awareness, and furthermore has provided a pattern, an example to follow. When we become self-aware of the necessity of becoming a responsible decision-maker, we have come a long way to becoming a responsible, co-creative partner with the Presence of God within. Then we will know that the course of our life is shared, and our anxieties will dissolve. With the Presence of God within as our guide and co-creative partner in life, we empower the flow of our lives in the right direction when we begin to "Let go, and let God."

CONFUSING "BAD THINGS" WITH THE NATURE OF GOD —

Very simply, all that exists in the world is that which is of people and that which is not of people. Following this logic, the tragedies and traumas of life are caused by: 1) the events *of nature* that injure people, 2) the result *of decisions we make* that are harmful, and 3) the result of *decisions other people make* that are harmful.

Death is perhaps the worst "bad thing" most people consider that could happen to them. In the broader perspective of our infinite lifetime, death is necessary for us to move on to the next phase of our infinite life-experience. It is not to be feared, and only to be avoided because it decreases our ability to gather greater wisdom of the process of living from imperfection to perfection on this material plane.

For people who have not had the benefit of a near-death experience, death represents an irrevocable transition from being "of people" to the realm of "not people." Those who have had a near death experience understand and know that this lifetime is simply one short phase of an infinite lifetime. Once past this material plane, they have come to realize that they are still "of people" but not material.

When "bad things" happen to us it is not an indication that God is angry with us. God is perfect. God is loving and in perfect love there is no anger. Simply assigning the responsibility for all bad things that occur in the world to God is a child-like way of resolving the situation and a result of lazy thinking. Nonetheless, suffering does occur. People do get hurt, either physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, or any other number of results from "bad things. Many, but not all, people have become distant in their relationship to God because they were taught that God created the painful events and situations that affect them personally. This single mistaken belief has led believers to think of God as having two natures. To them, God simultaneously is a mean and hurtful being, yet a loving, kind, and forgiving benefactor. This raises questions about God's nature. What is God's true nature, good guy or bad guy? People with this fallacious concept of God wouldn't know from one minute to the next which of God's natures they were dealing with. When people think of God as having two or more natures, they have anthropomorphized God and they come to distrust God.

"Bad things" due to acts of nature. Concerning acts of nature, nature is a place of gravity, rocks, water, weather, trees, and other growing things. Acts of nature include all aspects of nature not capable of self-will. The physical laws of nature we are acquainted with have been in place for billions of years, and are mechanical and not subject to amendment with any predictability. The travesties of nature that befall us are like the rain. They fall upon the good and the bad alike, without malice or deference.

For instance, imagine that you are on vacation driving along a highway under a steep, rocky embankment, pulling a travel-trailer behind your car. Suddenly a large boulder crashes down onto the trailer. That is a "bad thing" as most all of us would agree that occurred as an act of nature. Nothing personal about it — it just happened. Though God set into motion the creation of the world including its rocks and the laws of gravity, God didn't actively cause the rock to fall down and ruin your vacation. You just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Nothing personal about it. Had you passed earlier or later, the boulder would have merely cratered the highway rather than your trailer. Remember, it wasn't a premeditated act of God to harm you.

On the other hand, although God didn't actively cause the accident, God also didn't keep you from harm, either. You might ask, "Why didn't God save our trailer from that act of nature that destroyed it? The answer is this: As we saw earlier, since God is all-wise, there is no need to change the initial decisions made on how reality, including nature, should work. Once set in motion, it does what it is supposed to do, even when we get in the way. If God intervened in the events of our lives, we would come to expect God to do so, and we would abandon our quest for personal growth and maturity. We would not be challenged by life. Life would become easy and we would become lazy, uncreative, unchallenged, uninventive, and so on. Further, we would feel that our lives were being controlled and we would resent being pawns of God. Intervention by God in our lives to prevent harm works against our need to grow, mature, develop values, and pursue the ennobling qualities of our humanity.

If we prayed for a successful trip on our vacation and our trailer was hit by a boulder that does not mean that God either caused the boulder to hit the trailer or that God did not prevent it from hitting the trailer. It simply means that it was an act of nature. For myself, I would give great thanks to God that the boulder did not hit the car and kill or injure us! Was our prayer answered or not?

"Bad things" due to human decisions. Of the two categories of "bad things," the most complicated involves "bad things" that are caused by people. Considering that decisions and actions can be intentional or unintentional, personal or impersonal, "bad things" caused by human behavior can get complicated.

However, in none of these cases does God cause the "bad things." "Bad things" caused by people are products of independent will. God created us with free will, and God will not (God wills not to) interfere with our decisions — or anybody's decisions of any sort — after having given us the right to make our own decisions using our own free will. Remember, God is not capricious, fickle, or inconstant. God is constant and perfect. God doesn't change Its mind.

God does not and will not intervene in the self-willed decisions of people to either cause or prevent the tragedies of life, which come to us from our own decisions and actions, or from the decisions and actions of others. In any of these cases, personal self-will operates: ALWAYS. Self-will is sovereign within each of us. God has not, does not, and wills not to intervene in any of our decisions even when they are contrary to God's will.

Let us examine the most tragic, intentional human-decision catastrophe that has ever taken place — the Holocaust of World War II, where six million Jews were intentionally exterminated by Hitler's Nazi regime. The question that theologians, ministers, priests, and anguished believers have asked thousands of times is, "Why didn't God intervene in this tragedy that took place over a period of many years?" The question assumes that God didn't, but neither learned church scholars nor believers know if God did or didn't intervene without their awareness.

The answer is a refrain of the above statements: Individuals have self-will, not groups of people. Individuals determine the course of their life by every decision, whether significant or insignificant. The Holocaust look place over a period of many years because hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people of Germany and other countries individually-agreed with that policy of extermination by their commission or omission to act. On the other hand, courageous individuals as Schindler (*Schindler's List*) saw that a higher choice was available, made a decision, and took action to save Jews who would certainly have become ashes in the ovens of Nazi death camps.

Where was God?! Ever present in the hearts and minds of those courageous individuals, just as God's Fragment was present in the minds of those who chose and acted to kill innocent Jews. God's Divine

Fragment was present — waiting for the individual to invite God to aid his or her decision for loving-action. God's participation is not a dance of marionettes, but a co-creative dance of two living, willing partners — The Creator and each one of us. To realize God's Presence inside us is an act of will. God won't force Itself into our awareness! We have to make the effort. It is solely our decision to make — God has already made the decision to be in relationship with us.

Do you see how relevant this is to you, you personally, today? It is relevant to each of us every day in every decision we make. *Decisions are made by individuals, not societies.* God does not intervene whether ten, ten thousand, or ten billion people err. God's influence is not fickle or capricious but always consistent and subtle, allowing for the *individual* to will the course of his or her life into being. In this regard, the course of nations is determined by the decisions and actions of *individuals*, whether they lead or follow, whether they decide to act or not, or ignore to decide! God is present with the individual, acting in concert with the invitation of the individual. The Holocaust is a good example of God demonstrating complete respect for the sovereign will of the individual. The tragedies of societies are always, first, tragedies of individuals whether they are victims or persecutors. What could be more damning to a soul's infinite existence than a person's conscious will-decision to terminate the life course of one or hundreds of thousands of innocent victims?

"GOOD THINGS," "BAD THINGS," AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH —

Yes, the world is a tough place to live in, and it's easy to die here if you're not careful — sometimes without even knowing you're going to. But it isn't an impossibly difficult world to live in, either. Our species has grown, matured, become smarter, and wiser, not by being lazy and slothful, decadent or unproductive, but by the tough challenges of living and overcoming them.

We wonder why there is so much difficulty and trouble in the world, most of it created by people, including ourselves. Yet, difficulties do provide experience and wisdom in the use of our will to consciously and intentionally overcome them. Tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, droughts, earthquakes, and human needs provide an environment for decision-

making for exercising our will in situations that test and stretch our strengths. In that stretching, we grow.

God created the universe, set laws into place, and then gave us a mechanical, electrochemical body and brain, a mind, and a will to direct and train the mind and make decisions that hold the potential to develop our spirituality and contribute to the growth of our soul. We learn from our mistakes and from right choices and decisions. These experiences aid and guide our decisions that advance the maturity of our personality, increase our wisdom, and help us learn to love better each day.

Overcoming the difficulties of life and surviving tragedies tempers our character and our personalities, giving us a history in our soul by which our surviving spirit will be known after our physical death. Our record of decisions marks our capacity for soul survivorship. What this means is that our decisions, as humans on this material plane, enhance or diminish our capability to overcome the challenges of survival in the many eras of our afterlife experiences. Our soul is the record, or storehouse of wisdom, that returns to us in the afterlife after our material dissolution (mortal death). If you make no decisions during your lifetime, then there is no wisdom to go forward with you.

Our intentions tell of the direction of our longings. Shakespeare accurately said that all the world is but a stage upon which we act our lives. Had God made it easy for us to live without risk, then we would become lazy, slothful, ignorant, and generally unproductive without need or want to progress and improve the way we live, and especially the way we think, what we think, and the choices we make. We would not have developed to the point where we could express our loving nature, no matter how immature it may be, or our willingness to become like God. Difficulties exist to force us to choose the way we act and react to life, to choose what we will become. An easier life does provide more immediate choices for growth, though there is often less motivation to choose challenging avenues of growth.

The uncertainties of life and the vicissitudes of existence do not in any manner contradict the concept of the universal sovereignty of God. All evolutionary creature life is beset by certain inevitabilities. Consider the following:

Is **courage** — strength of character — desirable? Then must every person be reared in an environment that necessitates grappling with hardships and reacting to disappointments.

Is **altruism** — service to one's fellows — desirable? Then must life experience provide for encountering situations of social inequality.

Is **hope** — the grandeur of trust — desirable? Then must human existence constantly be confronted with insecurities and recurrent uncertainties.

Is **faith** — the supreme assertion of human thought — desirable? Then must the mind of man find itself in that troublesome predicament where it ever knows less than it can believe.

Is **the love of truth** and the willingness to go wherever it leads — desirable? Then must man grow up in a world where error is present and falsehood always possible.

Is **idealism** — the approaching concept of the divine — desirable? Then must man struggle in an environment of relative goodness and beauty, surroundings stimulative of the irrepressible reach for better things.

Is **loyalty** — devotion to highest duty — desirable? Then must man carry on amid the possibilities of betrayal and desertion. The valor of devotion to duty consists in the implied danger of default.

Is **unselfishness** — the spirit of self-forgiveness— desirable? Then must mortal man live face to face with the incessant clamoring of an inescapable self for recognition and honor. Man could not dynamically choose the divine life if there were no self-life to forsake. Man could never lay saving hold on righteousness if there were no potential evil to exalt and differentiate the good by contrast.

Is **pleasure** — the satisfaction of happiness — desirable? Then must man live in a world where the alternative of pain and the likelihood of suffering are ever-present experiential possibilities.

The confusion and difficulties on our planet do not signify that God and Its administrators lack either interest or ability to manage affairs differently. God possesses the power to make our planet a veritable paradise, but that would not contribute to the development of those strong, noble, and experienced characters that God so surely is forging out

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on our world between the anvils of necessity and the hammers of anguish. Our anxieties and sorrows, trials and disappointments are just as much a part of God's divine plan for our world and our lives as the exquisite perfection and infinite adaptation of all things to their supreme purpose on Paradise — heaven.



God and Creation — Devising a Pre-Creation Theology

With the nature of God established in the prior chapter, it is time to discuss God and creation. Because we *believe* God exists, and we *empirically know* that we exist, we need to make the connection between that belief-fact. The most striking questions that have always come to my mind are these, “What were the reasons God created the universe, and how do I fit into those reasons?” Getting to the bottom of that understanding will take a bit of intuitive work.

SEVENTEEN QUESTIONS —

1. Why did The Creator create the universe? For similar reasons that you go on vacations by yourself, and sometimes with others. You enjoy a personal experience. You enjoy getting to know who you are in larger terms. You gain experience in doing so and learn more about yourself. In that way, it probably was not much different for The Creator than it is for us. But, for The Creator, it was, in other ways, profoundly vast and eternally different.

First, you become aware that you want an experience that is broader than what you have been having. Second, you think about what it is you'd like to do and make plans. And third, you actually do something to bring that new experience into existence. It is reasonable that God was in much the same situation before creation. Before creation, there was just God, only God — God alone. God had not yet expressed Itself.

2. What attribute did God have to want to create the universe? In the situation before creation, God could only experience Itself by being conscious of Itself. God had *consciousness*. Consciousness is the essential

common attribute of God and us! Consciousness is thinking and wondering about our existence and experiences. Being conscious expands our ability to live consciously, to experience more of life and living. To experience more than consciousness, God had to *express* Itself. Doing so, God created the universe and became "The Creator."

Without the first step, consciousness, we cannot become more than we are, or express ourselves in ways that fulfill all the potential that lies within us, just as God did. Consciousness is that God-like attribute that enables us to become aware of the immense, innate, and undeveloped potential within us. Consciousness leads us to the awareness that we have options and choices for living. Our journey of life is very similar to what God must have experienced before creation — an awakening awareness of needing to experience more of ourselves. For us, that awareness, that consciousness, awakens in us as a desire to improve the quality of our life materially, socially, and spiritually. The next step is to choose to *express* our will to bring our undeveloped potential into existence — and then experience and enjoy what we have created, even if that is a vacation.

We can surmise that the first experience of the universe was The Creator's awareness of Itself as solely alone without extension into any dimension beyond Itself. From this position, The Creator expressed Its innate capability — to create. And from this thought sprang the expanding universe as we see and experience it today.

Surely, The Creator must have enjoyed watching the universe unfold, develop, and expand. Yet, a difficulty became apparent, if we can call it that. God existed and enjoyed the *finite* universe from the "outside" looking in. For us, it would be much like being in an airplane looking out the window. You are inside and everything else is outside. The only thing you can experience is what is inside the airplane. To experience the sky, you would have to become a bird.

3. What does the universe provide that The Creator could not get without it? The creation of the universe gave The Creator the *experience* of expressing the potential to create. It gave The Creator the *experience* of creating.

Of all that existed and now exists in the universe, the one thing truly new that is added to the universe is experiences of those who live in it. Look at

it this way: If The Creator knows all there is to know, nothing would be new to know. As you probably realize, The Creator is a curious being, a characteristic of people "created in God's image" on all planets. If you are curious, you too will wonder about your life and ask, "Is this all there is?"

Do you see that simple point? Before creation, God had no way of experiencing, beyond self-awareness. God's existence was neither dead nor alive. The Creator was not dead for it had not lived. The Creator existed but was not living. In such a situation, you would ask, "Is this all there is?" The Creator probably did, too, and in less than an instant the totality of all-potential of a dimensional universe sprang into existence and will continue to expand into the Infinite Ages.

4. Once the physical universe was created, did this new relationship help The Creator experience Itself? In that instant immediately following the initiation of Creation, which you would estimate at less than a nanosecond of time, God knew all that could be known about Its relationship to the dimensional universe and the totality of the universe that would come into being. All matters of the dimensional universe are predictable when you know all the laws of physics and you are also the "Grand Absolute Actuary" of the universe. Perhaps an overly developed metaphor is that the dimensional universe, devoid of sentient beings, is a grand, four-dimensional billiard table that is not limited by gravity, other than that which emanates from the center of the physical universe, and by the rotational motion of the whole of the universe.

In that moment, God knew that to experience the universe in a more intimate relationship it would be necessary to exist simultaneously *as an experiential being inside the dimensional universe*, as well as being outside of time and the dimensional universe as the Eternal Creator in Paradise. Doing so, to continue the metaphor, God could simultaneously enjoy the experience of flying as a bird in the clouds, while still being "inside the airplane," i.e., the eternal universe, Paradise.

Although The Creator could observe all that was existent within the universe, God was, nonetheless, separate and apart from it. God resides in the Eternal Now of Paradise (without dimension or time), while the physical universe exists in time as an infinite, developmental, material presence "outside" of Paradise.

The physical universe and its three dimensions provide measurable boundaries, while the fourth dimension, time, provides a way of measuring the process of existence, i.e., living. Living is a process of experiencing all that is around us from one development to another, as time passes. Without the universe, without some expressed form or manifestation of The Eternal Creator's potential, The Creator would have no process of existence to experience Itself and know Itself. The process of existence is what we call living; living provides experience for knowing ourselves.

While God The Creator encompasses all *existent* knowledge, even the omniscient God, the One who knows all, cannot know that which has not taken place, i.e., God cannot know that which does not exist. The future is predicated upon the present and what occurs in the present. The decisions we make today will affect the rest of our lives. If no one made any new decisions, the future would not change. You see, the future is predictable but only if no changes are made in the present. Any decisions and actions that are taken today cause the future to become different. Think of it in terms of making a cake. Mix the ingredients together and pour the batter into a pan. If the batter is not placed in the oven, it will remain the same almost indefinitely. But, put the pan of batter into the oven, and the future of the batter changes. Soon you have cake! The actions taken thirty minutes earlier changed the outcome.

5. Why did The Creator create imperfect beings who would make errors? Because God is not material, has no dimensions, and exists outside of the finite physical universe. The element that was needed for God to experience the process of living was an extension of Itself *within* people who would live within the finite universe. This extension is an ethereal wisp of God's Consciousness — something very distinct and identifiable of God in every aspect. Some people call this fragment "the Kingdom of God," "the Father Fragment," or the "Holy Spirit." Due to the gender of the word "father," the Fragment will be referred to as the "Divine Fragment" in the rest of the book. It is through the Divine Fragment in each of us that The Creator personally experiences the universe as a process of existence— living. A Divine Fragment of God resides in us and experiences living through us!

We have all the necessary attributes of God that make this possible. Consider your own being. You are innately *curious*. You are also invested with *self-will*, will that is totally supported and guided by your own *intelligence, wisdom, and spontaneous insights*. Your will expresses in ways that are truly God-like, many of which you have only partially explored.

All the attributes of The Creator are primary to our being like The Creator. Yet, the attribute that is foundational to the development of our conscious, co-creative relationship with the Divine Fragment is the attribute that is foundational to God: *Consciousness*. Our consciousness is the frontier where we become aware that we are not alone, but are accompanied by "the other" who travels with us in our life's course. The ethereal wisp of God's Consciousness in us and our own consciousness provide the window and doorway for a conscious and intimately personal relationship between God and us!

Though you have a finite beginning, you are given the possibility of an infinite life. You can live into the future for as long as The Creator will, if you make that choice and act on it. You have the innate capacity to learn, to grow, and to guide the evolution of your own spiritual development, which is inherent with the ascendant spiritual career. Lastly, you have choice of all that is in you and surrounding you, notwithstanding congenital and developmental physical and mental problems of some individuals.

Primary to our development is our ability to be self-aware — *consciousness*. When we are self-aware, we begin to question our existence. We wonder how we can grow into our innate potential, probably as God did before the universe was created. Only when we question our existence, and become aware of ourselves as having the God-like abilities to choose, decide, and act to change our lives, can we truly, consciously experience life as a *conscious process* of living. Until then, we will be dependent upon what the world and the universe dishes out to us.

Only through the willing participation of imperfect humans, who aspire and strive toward perfection of being, while interacting with all aspects of the universe and each other, can The Creator experience the process of *becoming* perfect.

Look at it this way: As a child you looked at yourself and knew yourself as who you were, not knowing any differently. But through your curiosity and your desire for an easier and more fulfilling life, you began to explore your being and to express its potential. Through experience and interacting with life and all its challenges, you become aware of who you are as fulfilled and unfulfilled potential. So, too, with God The Creator.

The joy of God's perfection of being can only be achieved and understood through the process of living from imperfection to perfection, if we accept the challenge. God can only experience this through us! And though this may take billions of years involving trillions upon trillions of ordinary people and created beings over the span of an immense dimensional universe that continues to expand, there is no necessity to hurry the process, but to enjoy it — both for all of us who engage the challenge and for God The Creator, and all Its helpers. No one loses, as it is to every creature's benefit to win, if you wish to put it into a win-lose context.

Only through imperfect beings, who have total freedom and total responsibility for their lives through the choices they make as they wrest a living in each moment, could The Creator experience existence AS a personal process of living. Only through the most imperfect of beings could The Creator experience the process of becoming perfect — and only through those people who make decisions to survive, then perpetuate their survival, learn, gain experience, and make wiser and wiser decisions and create a more profound life. They learn to live in harmony with others, then with their planet, and then the universe. Some do not succeed, but only because they consciously decide not to continue, which is unfortunate but wholly their choice.

You can see then that life has purpose but only you can give it meaning. The purpose of life is to live and grow. The meaning you give it is your own life's expression of how you live your life to the fullness of your potential.

6. Why is our imperfection important to The Creator? Almost immediately after the creation of the dimensional universe, God could predict all that could be known about the universe, even into the ageless infinity of the future. Though God knew all, God could not experience a

relationship with Itself, or know Itself other than as The Creator. Initiation of material beings who would live on habitable worlds was begun, whereupon began the "seeding" of the universe with fragments of The Creator in individual humans when they were ready.

These "Divine Fragments" contain all the attributes of The Creator to promote growth and the eventual development of attributes of God-like qualities in the lives of material beings in the dimensional universe. Thus, The Creator could participate in the settling and development of the universe *not only through but also in and with* those individuals. The investment of so many God-potential attributes provides us with an ever-expanding potential. This too is necessary for God to experience the process of becoming perfect through our imperfection as we approach perfection through the expression of all of our potential capabilities.

This plan could only provide results approaching perfection if humans were in many ways created in The Creator's image with many attributes inherent in their being, with total freedom of will, and total responsibility for their will and their actions, similar to The Creator. That is why The Creator did not create automatons or perfect beings for this task, but imperfect beings. Is this not an ingenious solution and absolute paradox of sorts?

Reasonably, the all-knowing, Eternal Creator of the universe was curious enough about a personal relationship with Itself that It brought into existence short-lived, unknowing, and imperfect material beings to assist in that pursuit, and is loving enough to share it all with us. By doing so The Creator also created an infinite and loving personal relationship with each of us. Each of us is personally needed, wanted, and loved by The Creator as though we were the only person in the universe that God loved. The relationship of The Creator with Itself is oneness, wholeness, and complete eternal love of self. In order for God to *experience* and enjoy this relationship, God extended that relationship to each of us, and we get to enjoy the benefits as our own. Take heart! God enjoys you, and me, and every person. And we can best support that relationship when we strive to attune our lives to God's — as creators of oneness, wholeness, and unselfish love of self and others.

The benefits for both partners in this relationship are similar. The Creator receives the experience of living through the lives of each person, totally at risk that he or she may never aspire, let alone strive, to become like The Creator. We receive the opportunity to use all of these attributes as a finite creator to make decisions and take actions that will propel us along an infinite journey of life that will never end even after we are in the very presence of The Creator in Paradise. Then we will reside in eternity, in Paradise, with God, as active, co-creative partners ready to serve God and those who are still on their ascendant spiritual journey.

This is neither a predatory nor vicarious relationship for either partner on this journey, but one that is highly beneficial and personal to both. The Divine Fragment is a guide, much like a pilot on a ship who guides the ship into safe harbor when the captain (your will, in this case) relinquishes control of the ship (your life) to the pilot. When we offer full cooperation to the Divine Fragment, we have engaged the journey with the most possible benefit to each of us.

7. Does God control everything? Surely not, for that would be far less than The Creator's profound generosity. God has no need to control us, as that would limit God's ability to experience the universe through us. We are effectively controlled by our material nature and the decisions we make. While our material nature limits us, our spirit nature provides us with a means of liberation through the use of our will and the decisions we make. Thus, we have the capacity to liberate ourselves when we make decisions that contribute to the expression of our God-like attributes. There is a balance at work: While our mechanical limitations provide for stability at the expense of progress, our spirit alliance liberates us from the physical level. Individually, as we gain universal insights and begin to comprehend the cosmic aspects and responsibilities of our decisions, we become more and more stabilized as a part of the larger universe. Doing so, we have less and less need for a material body to stabilize our reckless nature.

The stability of our life's course is important because our biological evolution has provided us with an immense lack of self-restraint. On one hand, that can be very detrimental to our finite existence, yet, on the other hand, it provides us with an immense capacity to try anything, and everything, to grow. Individually, it allows us to have a tremendous

number of experiences from which we can gain vast treasures of wisdom, provided we use our mind to examine those experiences for wisdom. And because of the energetic nature of our mind, this wisdom is imprinted and passed on to others through the universal mind function of the Infinite Spirit that connects everyone on our planet. The wisdom we gain after we beget children is not lost but passed on through this energetic circuit.

8. What was God's intention in creating other creative beings?

God's intention in creating all the other creative beings, and humans, too, was to share the wealth and participate in the joy, love, and the "fun" of creating. It is much like parents watching their children and neighbor children play in a large park or playground. For the parent, it is both a vicarious thrill and one of great personal pleasure to experience. For God, there is the pleasure of being in and with each child and parent as they experience their world, themselves, and each other. God is available to each of us as a Fragment of Itself and gets to enjoy our creativity without overbearing our consciousness.

God is omnipotent, but God has chosen not to be omnificent. The Creator has chosen to share the joy of creating and doing what needs to be done in a large universe with many others. Look around you. Do you see only one type of flower, one animal, one plant, and one type of body of water? What you see is an abundance of everything around you. Our Creator is generous, vastly generous, and is not selfish with anything. Even you can create. Be assured that it delights your Creator to share Its creative abilities with many creatures.

There is one order of creative beings called "Creator Sons." They create similarly as The Creator and they have created vast arrays of worlds, stars, systems, and whole galaxies of stars and systems. What The Creator put in motion, however, was original and all else flows from that event.

9. Does creation continue? Yes. Is new energy created? Yes. The original expansion of the energetic universe continues to flow from the eternal center of the universe, never ending. Creation continues.

Our scientists look in the heavens and witness the birthing of stars from clouds of gasses, gasses that were formed from free atoms and molecules, and these having been formed from the material that is either particles or

energy. For scientists and yourself, these formations of stars appear to come from nothingness, and so creation is seen to continue. When you are more fully aware of material formation, you will know that this is simply one evolutionary step of many — from nothingness through the super novae explosions that disseminate material far and wide.

Creation from our perspective is the manipulation of universe energy to form new phenomena. While The Creator controls universe energy, The Creator generously encourages many beings to manipulate that energy.

10. Are we alone in the universe? There are far more creatures in this large universe than just humans on our planet and on other planets. There are beings that God created. They were not born as humans are.

Angels, for example, are God's children of light. They have been called messengers, though message carrying is an activity they do only occasionally. They work for God in the long chain of delegation of universe organization. We do, too, when we have decided that is what we want to do for the duration of our infinite existence. And in doing so, we not only do God's will but learn, grow, develop, and evolve to become more. Doing for us is the mechanism of learning how the universe works, how to work in harmony with the flow of the universe, which some call Tao.

When we live this way, doing and growing, being in harmony and alignment with the flow of the universe becomes a way of life. It can be named any name you want, but it is the way that leads to God. Angels help us learn this first by guiding us into learning situations that support our universe path of growth.

11. Do angels guide us into difficult situations? Yes, but only when we have not learned our lessons earlier. When we make right decisions that are qualified by being moral and ethical, loving answers come forward letting the flow of good order, alignment, and harmony with the *ALL* flow to us. We let it flow through us by making right decisions followed by actions that follow through on those decisions.

Intentions precede decisions and actions. Intentions, contrary to popular opinion, count for something when they are made sincerely. In and of themselves, intentions are neither "bad" nor "good." Intentions only point

to a desired and preferred course of action. They are preliminary to making decisions and preliminary to taking action. Intentions are inherent in anything that is done, even by The Creator. If you intend to take a cooked meal to your neighbor who is ill, but your employer asks you to stay late at work, that does not indicate that you have done anything wrong. But in fact, your good intention is an indicator of your loving and generous nature.

12. If God knows everything and is all-powerful, doesn't that mean that our lives are a part of God's plan for the universe and that the course of our lives is predestined? As The Creator living outside of time, in eternity that is timeless, God has an awareness, omniscience, of all that exists and happens. Yet, foreknowledge of events does not mean that what occurs is foreordained. Though each of us has a pre-destined plan for our life, it is not foreordained. Just as God has free will, we have free will, too. It is free and unfettered by any set course.

Though the universe has a plan of development, how we live our life in that process is totally up to us, dictated by our decisions from day to day. And though we are invested with a Fragment of The Creator that does not mean we are coerced to follow the course of the universe, what our Divine Fragment suggests, or to follow our own plan of life. God has no need or desire to interfere in our free-will decisions. As the way of the universe is the flow

13. If God doesn't control everything and we have creative powers similar to God, why are we so incapable? We are so incapable because we are so immature in our awareness of the consequences of our thoughts, decisions, and actions. It is our material nature that limits us. Fortunately, we are in possession of a mind to make rational decisions to remain as we are, grow, or regress. By the use of our mind mechanism we can enrich and develop our spirit-potential, or not. Our spirit-potential is that new, budding, and emerging spirit-being that will be fully existent after our material death. Developing it in this lifetime helps us be a part of the flow of the universe. Doing so, we become capable members, partners, in the universe.

14. Does this mean that the whole race of humanity becomes more and more mature as each individual does? Yes, and to the contrary, too.

The consciousness of genocidal warfare that has spread among our kind is to the contrary and now infects most of our species. Positive, constructive decisions contribute to the maturity of our species, while negative, destructive decisions do not. Using wisdom is the application of past constructive experience, yet even destructive experiences contribute to wisdom. Destructive past experiences give us the wisdom to say, "Not this way!" while positive experiences give us the wisdom to say, "This way!" It is still a matter of individual mind-decision. Each decision in our life is truly one that contributes or tears down our life and others.

15. If genocide, for example, is spreading won't the planet eventually be lost due to destructive imprinting on human consciousness? Yes, except for new efforts to give us a broader spectrum of choices for decisions.

16. Does this mean that there is more "outside" spiritual influence at work on our planet to help guide its development toward the flow of the Universe? Yes. Larger cosmic insights are more readily available to each of us so we can make effective contributions to our own individual growth and that of humankind. This is not a "quick fix" or patchwork repair but a remedial program of very long duration so the wisdom of more right decisions by individuals becomes invested in the consciousness of our species.

This influence became more evident in the late 1980s when the Berlin Wall came down, dictatorships were overturned, and apartheid in South Africa came apart. Many more positive influences have come into being, such as the many angel incidents, angel television shows, books on developing our inner awareness, the development of incredible advances in communications technologies, global commerce and finance, all of which help tie our basket of nations together more closely and interrelatedly. Yet, influencing the course of humankind and advancing the mechanisms of societal evolution does not abrogate or violate in any way the self-will decision sovereignty of individuals, but aids all to make more globally and cosmically responsible decisions. Everybody wins.

17. Are illnesses, genetic flaws, and physical, mental, and emotional degeneration a part of God's plan for us? Although God The Creator is ultimately responsible for the consequences that creation set into motion,

our bodies are susceptible to damage by processes that are also a part of creation. At the grossest level, we can fall down and break bones, pulverize muscle tissue, snap tendons, and crush ligaments. At the most definitive level, chromosomes can break due to exposure to harsh conditions. Radiation and chemicals inside and outside the body can affect gene structure so that when chromosomal splitting and fusion occur, the problems are passed onto the next generation. It is not personal.

In a very elementary parallel, the problems of physical health are not much different from the physical problems of a house. Yet, people in our culture do not assign responsibility for the problems of their house, such as a leaking roof, to God. People have separated the house from themselves. So, too, will people on our planet ultimately understand that their body is not who they are and that God is not using their bodies as a medium of discontent with them. Our illnesses and degenerative problems were not assigned to us personally or generally, but are a result of the evolutionary development of our species. As these problems affect every human being, it is a general affliction of being a material, evolutionary being on an undeveloped material planet. We could say that God is disposed to hurting humans in general, and we could say that God is disposed to hurt us individually, since we take our illnesses and problems personally. But neither is the case. The reason God does not interfere in our lives individually or in general is because of the gift of free will.



Our Relationship with The Creator

While many have been satisfied or complacent to accept the secondhand authority of religious positions as rabbis, priests, ministers, pastors, and popes, there are always a few who want to have a personal relationship with The Creator. There are always some believers who want a firsthand relationship with another person, whether that is their neighbor or God. Some have wondered how to use their religion to help them build a personal and intimate relationship with The Creator that they have always craved.

Eight Questions —

1. What do we need to learn about our relationship with God?

There is in the balance of the universe a relationship that is personal and even intimate between The Creator and all of Its human children in the past, present, and the infinite Ages of the future of this dimensional universe. It is also a relationship between The One, God The Creator, and us through a fragment of The Creator in each individual. Your existence is not impersonal, distant, or immaterial to either your individual Divine Fragment or to you. On the contrary, it is personal, immediate, and very material to you and to your individual Divine Fragment.

Only you determine to what extent, if any, this relationship for all time develops. Once you become conscious that there is a God who created the universe, you become responsible for your part in that relationship. The offer of an ageless relationship with The Creator is always available to you. It is not limited or conditioned by anything other than your willing participation. What is offered is a relationship that enables you to explore all your potential, and in doing so, when you accept, you offer The Creator the ability to explore Its relationship with Itself and Its universe to

the extent that you will to engage it. By your willing consent and willing participation, you enable The Creator to explore the potential of Its creation. When you do this, you enable yourself to "ride the coattails" of The Creator to an ascendant life that allows you to explore the ever-widening and deepening potential of your own being.

2. Will our mistakes keep us from being in Paradise with God? In a universe that only retains constructive, positive, and enlightened decisions and accomplishment, success is always the first option. Failure only occurs when individuals consistently make choices that do not support their progress. Every possible care is taken to help ensure your success. And as time and your spiritual career develop, you will make fewer and fewer decisions that jeopardize your success. Literally trillions upon trillions of ascendant humans have become successful in achieving and enjoying the personal embrace of The Creator in Paradise. You can, too, if you sincerely will to choose to begin this journey.

God has asked you to will to co-creatively participate in the unfoldment and fulfillment of your human and spiritual life plan. Halting or reluctant participation will yield like results. Pro-actively willing to participate co-creatively with your Divine Fragment will allow all the energy of your spiritual helpers to move you swiftly toward a fulfilling and satisfying life, even now.

Do not be mistaken that by pro-actively willing to participate co-creatively with your Divine Fragment that you will have a life of ease. Such is not the case. Problems and difficulties will arise, as they should in any school of learning. What you will receive is sure and continual advisement and guidance to help you achieve one success after another, where one success will give way to another and another. Yes, at times you may ask during a respite of learning, "Now what?" because you may feel that your progress is motionless. Enjoy this time because soon you will be catapulted into another adventure of growth and development.

During your planetary life, you may expect that you will become more and more at peace with your world and what it brings to your doorstep of life. This will occur as you become more at peace with yourself, who you are, your purpose in life, and the meaning you give to it. Only a loving God would give you the opportunity to grow to such an extent that you

could become, in the eventuality of time, in a universe with infinite future Ages to come, a veritable creator in your own right. Begin to practice that now in your life. Begin where you are.

God's offer to you would not be complete without a full disclosure of your current circumstances. Not all inhabited worlds are as divisive, uncertain, and difficult to live on as ours. Former junior managers of our world and the larger administrative unit our world resides in have made numerous mistakes. Centuries of wars, genocide, gross immorality, and abusive family, community, and national environments are not typical but rare. Though a Son of The Creator and many other spiritually evolved masters have visited our world recently, the examples of their lives largely go unduplicated by the vast population of our planet. Nonetheless, our world is not forgotten or forsaken, but does provide an environment where courageous sons and daughters of faith live out incredible examples for others on other worlds.

3. Will help come only to individuals? Even now our world is receiving advanced assistance to become more hospitable to individuals who wish to live moral lives. Eventually, it will provide a nurturing environment where children will be raised in families and communities that immediately offer a life of right decisions and outcomes without jeopardy. It is not an unreal possibility that our world will become peaceful and harmonious. Consider the immense changes in our world since the beginning of the last quarter of the 20th century. Progress will be swifter as more and more leaders of nations, industry, commerce, finance, and governance become more aligned with moral decisions and the concern and welfare of those who follow. Each of you is endowed with a Divine Fragment that is even now bringing more influence to you, without compromising your universal right of inviolable self-will. What you will see within yourself are more options for decisions and their outcomes.

4. Why do we call God "Father"? God was not known as "Father" until Jesus shared this relationship with his disciples. His own relationship to God was extended to us. Jesus knew of this relationship firsthand, and knew that it existed for us as well.

There are several other reasons, but in every case it is not a factor of the natures, attributes, characteristics, or traits of God but our view of our relationship to God. First, our western culture recognizes that families are governed or supported by the father primarily and the mother secondarily. And that is not a matter of importance but of recognition of authority. It is not the same in other cultures where the mother is recognized as the governess and authority of the family.

Second, we live for a very short time during which we primarily experience the attributes of God as "father." After we pass from this world, we will gain a far larger perspective of God's activities in the universe. God is "mother" in her attributes as Creator, sustainer, and provider of abundance to the entire universe. For example, as "father," God is seen in our culture as the authority, rule maker, and the one who ultimately decides on issues concerning the course of the universe.

We see God as "doing" masculine, fatherly things but our culture has limited our definition of God in a biased way. God is not only a "doer" of things but also exhibits "emotions" from the human perspective. Were we to see God in the feminine role more often, we would recognize the generosity, mercy, compassion, beneficence, and intimate care of each of us as those of an endearing mother. Our culture has given attention and importance to the attributes of a firm and unwavering father who knows that his children will need a firm grasp on reality in their adult years to survive by their own wits as well as by the generosity of their Mother-God.

In this regard we see in God the authority, justice, and executive functions involving the management of our world. We mistakenly assign to God the authority for dispensing rewards and punishments for good and bad decisions we personally have made concerning the events of our life. For those we are solely responsible. In this regard, we are as much "father" in determining the course of our own life and its rewards and punishments.

When we become more fully aware of the attributes of God, we will see that God is all of Father-Mother-Creator God and more. We will see God as the Infinite Upholder of the universe necessarily exhibiting the traits of a father as well as those of a mother. Given time and further maturity, we will see, too, that we exhibit traits and attributes of a father as well as a

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mother. When we come to that plateau of realization, we will know that we too are more than man or woman, father or mother. We are spiritual children of The Creator-Mother God. In the infinite duration of our spiritual career, we will come to know that we are without gender, without social and familial role, with only one chore — to grow into perfection of being.



God and Jesus

Seven Questions —

1. **Who is Jesus in relation to God?** You recall that The Creator has given other beings, in addition to human beings, the opportunity, and ability to create. There is an order of beings called Creator Sons, as I mentioned earlier, who have been delegated the powers of creation. They continue the creative embellishment of the universe that The Creator began. Because they are also administrators of inhabited planets, they are required to fully and completely understand the challenges of the human spiritual journey. To do so and to assume full sovereignty of their creative endeavors, they have seven bestowals to fulfill, the last being to take up the life of a material person on one of their created worlds. In this regard, Jesus did successfully take on this challenge.

Of the millions of inhabited planets he could have chosen in his realm, he chose our world. It was in most need of enlightenment of its position in the universe. He chose as his personal mission, in addition to fulfilling his bestowal requirement, to reveal the true character and nature of The Creator to his material children on earth. His visit was also an inauguration of the broader efforts to uplift this planet's progress, and to influence the ethical, moral, and "religious" decisions of each individual person. God's influence is not intrusive, but subtle, loving, benign, and giving — bestowing upon each of us a broader awareness of choices for action, from within our consciousness and from without. The choices are always ours to make. We simply have more choices to pick from. Even not choosing is a choice.

2. **How was Jesus able to come into awareness of his divinity?** He began by first giving up his consciousness as a Creator Son to inhabit the presence of the fertilized cells that became the babe in swaddling clothes,

Jesus. He began life as we all do, without consciousness, without self-awareness of who he really was. As he grew, his own Divine Fragment prodded his conscious mind to ask questions, to search for answers, to contemplate, to sit in stillness, to discover his true inner being, similarly as it does in each of us. It was not until Jesus was baptized by John that he was fully awakened and joined with his Divine Fragment to become a fully spirit-realized human. From that point onward, he knew with full awareness who he was and why he was on our planet.

3. Why did Jesus die if he was a divine being? As Jesus came into fuller and more complete awareness of the Presence of God within himself, Jesus began to reveal more and more about the true nature of God. He also began to illustrate and point out the vast differences in the nature of God as explained by the institutionalized Jewish religion. In particular, he revealed the infinitely true relationship that exists between each individual and God. He became a religious and social activist and revolutionary. Because he would not relent and submit to the established religious authorities, he was killed. He had made enemies of powerful church authorities and refused to submit to their authority. They arranged to eliminate him, and the local political-military authority conveniently killed him. As a Creator Son, he would not do anything to abrogate, change, amend, or countermand any decision by any one of us. Doing so, he allowed his death to occur.

4. But, what about the sacrifice aspect of his death? That aspect is both "sweet and sour." The sweet aspect is that the Apostle Paul documented the life of Jesus. Without his efforts, the life of Jesus would have been lost and become a mythical story. The sour aspect is that Paul had to use existing religious explanations for the mortal life and death of a Son of God. For Paul and those who came later, the only explanation available for the mortal death of a Son of God, who is all-powerful and could have easily changed the sequence of events that led to his murder, was to use the existing concept of sacrifice as an explanation.

For us today, even those of us with limited insights, that explanation is irrational. Maintaining this erroneous explanation of Jesus' death continues to assign a split personality to God. Paul had been trained by his Jewish culture to know God as being conflicted and dual in nature, and seen as capricious and unpredictable. We now know that if this were

actually the case, the universe would have ceased to exist in the earliest moments of creation. A conflicted nature does not create a universe of harmony, order, and pattern that can exist into eternity. Imperfection of being is finite, having a beginning and ending. Only perfection of being can be expressed in forms that are eternal.

Because God is eternal, consistent, and One with All of the universe and its eternal flow, the actions, words, or thoughts of humans cannot manipulate God. God is constant without variance or exception. Sacrifice of sons or daughters, lambs or bullocks, or oil or gold neither sways God nor convinces God of a person's righteousness.

For us, the most troublesome issue that is revealed in this loving interpretation of Jesus' death is that we are truly and unequivocally responsible for our actions, and cannot wheedle, connive, coerce, or manipulate God to absolve us of that responsibility. Such is the price of free will. Neither sacrifices nor repetitious rituals or other gestures can change that; only right intentions and sincere efforts can. Further, the image of Jesus can now reflect the true message of his life — that God truly loves us, that we are not apart from God, and that the Kingdom of God is within each one of us. No longer is Jesus the scapegoat for our sins or the pawn of an angry God.

5. Then, is there any support for the related issues of atonement and redemption? For longer than the age of the earth, there has been no need for sacrifice to maintain a loving, benevolent, and cherished relationship with God. There is no need for atonement for our nature. It is our challenge to overcome, a stone against which to sharpen our developing emotional nature and spiritual enlightenment, a steep hill we willingly climb in order to strengthen our legs for a longer journey. As for our need to be redeemed, we were never given up, lost, or abandoned. We are held as precious and cherished by God. God has never been apart from us. Though we may distance ourselves from God and feel apart from God and project that separation onto God, God is never apart from us.

6. If the traditional Christian beliefs of sacrifice, atonement, and redemption were removed, what would the remaining religion of Christianity look like? Go to the New Testament and glean only the words of Jesus. What were his teachings? He did not teach about himself,

but taught you how to have a good relationship with God and with your fellow men and women. He taught you through his own practices of loving relationships with others and with himself and with God.

Give reason to what he taught:

Love God, for God is good.

Worship God, for in worshipping you come to realize that all that is good comes from The Source and you are Its expression.

Learn to love unconditionally, for that is how God loves you, and how Jesus taught us.

Learn to live in loving ways that exhibit strength of your character, heart, and personality.

Live in loving ways that contribute to your soul's longevity by moral and ethical decisions and service to self and others.

Live to express and demonstrate the totality of all positive and constructive potential within yourself for the duration of your human existence. Only by doing so can God enjoy and discover the expression of all Its potential in the duration of infinity, thereby contributing to the collection of all good decisions and service.

Love yourself as the ultimate conduit of God's loving expression and yours.

Love others in this same way and for these same reasons.

Bring others to awareness of God and God's true, undivided, unconditional loving relationship with them, and then let them make their decisions concerning their relationship with God.

7. **Are there any "don'ts" connected to becoming like God?** There are no don'ts. If you are to become creators in the universe as God is, you cannot create or maintain a small or large universe by don'ts, but only by doing that which is in concert with The First Creative Source and in harmony with the flow of the universe. When you do that which is good from positions of love, only good will be created and come forth. When you carry a light in the darkness and shine it forward, do you not go to the light once having discerned the right way? It is not a matter of avoiding the darkness but of going with the light.



II

A Socially Sustainable God

INTRODUCTION —

What follows is a "building block" style of logic that forms a tremendously strong foundation for understanding who and what God is. These next chapters will help us understand why God gives us so much freedom, as described in the earlier chapters.

If you come from a traditional Christian background, the next two chapters will cause you to reflect upon your Christian beliefs. The "building block" style of presenting this material provides a simple clarity about who and what God really is that you may not have thought of before. The simple conclusions that are built upon this strong foundation are probably very different from the ones you were taught in your traditional Christian church.

The theology developed in Chapter 6 is not new. That may seem rather startling to readers because, if it is not new, why write a book about this Loving-God Theology? The answer is that although theologians for centuries have known that only a God with a singular loving nature could create and sustain an eternal universe, *the consequences of that Truth have not been shared with the believers who sit in the pews of Christian churches.*

I suspect the reason it has not been shared with church members is that doing so would be like removing one can from a stack of cans in a grocery store display — removing one can would cause the whole stack to fall apart. What follows removes that first "can." As you read the remainder of the chapter, you will see how the "stack" of the Pauline doctrines falls

apart. *And that is what may eventually happen to traditional Pauline Christian theology.* Some truths and concepts that spin out of this basic Truth may be at odds with traditional beliefs and make some readers uncomfortable. However, most readers will find the simplicity of these new beliefs intriguing enough to examine the validity of their older beliefs.

This new Truth about God provides a new paradigm for our relationship with God. Though the Loving-God Theology may become a contentious issue for church organizations that embrace traditional Pauline Christianity, it could be an answer for individual church members who want to renew a passionate commitment to a personal, even intimate, loving relationship with God. Perhaps it could help Christian believers interpret their lives in terms of this loving relationship and rediscover why they call themselves Christians.

I do know, for you individually, if you ask God or Jesus for clarity of belief, it will be revealed to you by the Spirit of Truth, for that is its function in every awakening era of belief on this planet.

Regarding the appellations of God:

- 1) The word "God" is used very frequently in the text. Overuse in our western culture has made this word almost irrelevant and meaningless in the course of normal conversations and in readings such as this. That is unfortunate. For the redundancy and seeming overuse of that word in the text, I apologize.
- 2) The word "It" is also used, but sparingly as the "IT" word seems to unsettle most people. Traditionally, God has been consistently described in anthropomorphic terms to the extent that it is almost impossible for many people to think of God as being anything but human. "It" is used to name and describe The Creator "as It is," outside the limitations of anthropomorphic descriptions.
- 3) In deference to Jesus' *relationship* to the Father aspect of God, the pronouns "He," "Him," and "His" are used complementarity. This does not usurp the universal, genderless nature of God, which is all of Father-Mother-Creator God, and more.



Two Questions

1. If we believe God's nature is both vengeful wrath and loving, how can we have a fully empowered, loving relationship with God?
2. If God is solely a God of love, then what effect does this have on the traditional Christian doctrines of the sacrifice of Jesus' life for the atonement and redemption of mankind from sin?

Many people who come from traditional Judeo-Christian backgrounds were raised with a theology that no longer serves their spiritual growth. Their traditional *theology depicts God as filled with vengeful wrath and love. How can we have a powerful, loving relationship with God if the descriptions of God's nature are in opposition? We cannot.

Not knowing how God will react to their actions has caused many sincere believers to mistrust God and to develop a co-dependent relationship to God. We need consistent beliefs about God as a loving God in order to develop trust in all God's actions. Only then will believers want to be like God, which allows the possibility of expressing all the potential of that relationship through their lives. We must have consistent and clear beliefs about God as a loving God in order to align our energies with God-Mind energies within ourselves.

*** the-ol-o-gy** 1. the study of God and the relationship between God and the universe; study of religious doctrines and matters of divinity, 2. a specific form or system of this study, as expounded by a particular religion or denomination.

As a young adult, I came to the conclusion that a faith that accepts conflicting, irrational, and illogical beliefs about God is an unreasonable faith. It is reasonable, I believed, to have faith that God exists. It is reasonable to have faith that Jesus came to give us an example of how to live life filled with love of our self and love of others. It is reasonable to have faith that life exists after death. It is reasonable to have faith that Jesus showed us that this is possible. But it is unreasonable faith to

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believe that God deliberately created man imperfectly so that He would have to send His Son to earth to die for this imperfection. I concluded that it is reasonable to have faith that God has only one nature in an eternal universe: Totally and wholly loving. But, I didn't know how to prove it then.



A Loving-God Theology

Let us begin where all theologies begin — from a position based purely on statements of belief. From these statements of belief will emanate secondary statements of belief. Though seemingly sterile and aseptic, this discussion is basic to clear thinking about God and God's relationship to us. Let us begin building this new Loving-God Theology with beliefs that are fully in alignment with the God-Mind within us.

EVOLUTIONARY CONCEPTS OF GOD —

The origin of people, this planet, and the universe has mystified people since the dawning of conscious thought. Early tribal peoples had in common similar concepts of a "creator." Those myths and beliefs evolved slowly over the eons. Native Americans and the ancient Hebrews each developed a creation story that included the modern concept of a single God.

The Old Testament reveals the evolution of the Hebrew God in a series of God concepts including Yahweh, The Most High El Elyon, El Shaddai, Elohim, and The Supreme Yahweh, a God separate and apart from them. Their God was an all-powerful, distant king, who was revered, worshipped, feared, and appeased. This Man-god was a mysterious, invisible super-person who affected their lives, and who was responsible for the fortunate and the unfortunate events they experienced. Their concept depicted God as the ultimate tribal leader, a Man-god who expressed the full nature of a king who ruled over all the earth and all existence. He was all-powerful and could organize the forces of nature on earth and in heaven to the Hebrews' advantage or disadvantage according

to His mood. Therefore, it behooved Hebrew believers to attempt to please Him.

Their concept of God was the highest, ultimate concept of a deified human, a *humanized* deity who occupied the most powerful position of their culture. This monarch even had power over good fortune and bad, and life and death. He was a personage of such power that the fate of their nation could be arranged at will by this King-god. He could command legions of followers, vanquish enemies, and provide abundance in their fields. He was a corrector of faults, a stern lord of the lands who chastened those who fell into bad ways of living. He was seen as a provider and caretaker, much as a paternalistic king whose behavior is personal and emotional.

Their god had super-human emotions, needs, and wants. God was described as angry, wrathful, emotional, vengeful, loving, an all-provider, and the slayer of enemies, but also a God who could be cajoled, wheedled, and seduced by prayerful and worshipful believers. This God's anger could be appeased by human sacrifice, then later by animal sacrifice.

Over time, the Hebrew God-concept became so enmeshed and institutionalized in religious rules that it could not mature along with the growing intellectual and spiritual growth of its most God-conscious and spiritually insightful members. Hebrew prophets *revealed* newer God-concepts and newer truths about the nature of God that were often at odds with the older, institutionalized God-concept. What the prophets provided were new spiritual paradigms of the God-concept that required believers to think in new ways about the nature of God and God's relationship to them. Consequently, many prophets were stoned to death or exiled.

By the time Jesus arrived, the religious laws of the Hebrews had become so rigid and extensive that they inhibited the spiritual growth of individuals. Obligatory religious rituals got in the way of developing a personal relationship with God. To the individual, God had become obscure and remote. It is no wonder that Jesus was assassinated by the Sanhedrin: The Good News of a loving Presence of God *within each of us* that Jesus *revealed* was radically at odds with the Hebrew's traditional and institutionalized concept of God that was outside of believers.

LOVING-GOD CONCEPTS OF JESUS —

If we fully accept Jesus as a Son of God, as the incarnate representative of God among people [John 5: 43], then we must also accept that Jesus and God were well acquainted and that Jesus had an eternal relationship with God and an intimate knowledge of what God is really like. Is this too simple to understand and appreciate? How long had he known his Father, God? Was it one week, a month, a year, a thousand years, a million years, or billions of years? Further, should we accept or believe what Jesus said about his Father - God?

Use a personal example of your own to understand the credibility of Jesus' description of his eternal Father. Examine one or two of your longest enduring relationships. If you have had an ongoing, daily relationship with someone for twenty years or more, don't you feel confident that the description you could give about that person would be accurate and credible? Undoubtedly, your description would be free of any significant errors.

Jesus assures us, "*I and the Father are one*" [John 10: 30], and many similar phrases that speak of Jesus' intimate knowledge of God. Since Jesus' origins are purely spiritual, holy, and divine, we can accept his descriptions of God as the most accurate and reliable available to us. It would seem reasonable to accept Jesus' revealed concept of God over the evolutionary God-concept of the ancient Hebrews. Here, in his own words, is how Jesus described God: "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" [Matthew 5: 48]'.

From 1 John 4: 8 & 16, we are told that, "*God is love.*" Within these two statements rests Jesus' loving-God concept and description of God's true nature: God is perfect and God is loving. Jesus added, "*God is spirit...*" [John 4: 24] to ensure we are not mistaken as to God's form. God is perfect and God is love. This is Jesus' loving-God concept. *Jesus did not say anything to the contrary in any of the New Testament.*

What Jesus said about God is very simple and easily understood. The key words he used were: Father, love, perfect, and spirit. These four words are the hub and center of Jesus' loving-God concept. He described God in simple terms his followers could understand, and the youngest and the oldest of us can understand today. It is very clear, yet today many

Christians struggle with conflicting ideas about what God is and how God behaves.

The nature of God according to Jesus. The word "father" does not say so much about his nature as it says *who God is* to us. The word "father" tells us about God's relationship to his human children. It is important for us to fully appreciate the unlimited dimensions of God's relationship to us: God's relationship *to us* is loving and embodies perfection, the perfection we seek in our own relationships with others and with ourselves. Jesus' concept of God provides for the development of a healthy, functional relationship between God and each of us that is best described as a loving and supportive father/mother-child relationship.

The word "spirit" also does not say so much about the nature of God, but does tell us *what God is* and what God is not. Being spirit, and being The Creator outside of time, God is everywhere present at every point of time. God's Presence is at once in the entirety of the universe and yet existent in a space smaller than the distance between the particles in the nucleus of an atom. God's Presence can simultaneously be outside of us and intimately within us, each of us.

From Jesus' description of God's primary aspects of perfection and love, we can spin off many related aspects of God's nature. Love can exist without perfection; and perfection can exist without love. But combined they become *the nature* of God: God is unqualifiedly perfect, unqualifiedly loving, without asides, without qualifications, without exception, without conditions, reservations, or boundaries. God is not a mixed metaphor, not a being defined by irony, in definition. Consistent with that, God is a good and friendly God.

"God Is Love" [I John 4: 8,16]. It is our simplest prayer, a statement of faith, yet an understanding of God's true nature — one that is simple enough for children to understand and elders to appreciate and strive to become. This premise gives structure and definition to a personal, loving, co-creative spirituality. Either God is a God of love or God is not. John didn't say that God was loving sometimes and vengeful at other times. And neither did Jesus! He said God is love.

God is within each of us. Having been asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "*The Kingdom of God does not*

come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is within you" [Luke 17: 20-21],

The God of the ancient Hebrews was outside of their lives, as a monarch or king is outside of his subjects' lives. The thread of that concept is woven throughout all of the Old Testament books. The most important *revelation* Jesus gave us through his life, the way he lived it, and his word is that God is not distant from us. God is not outside our lives, but intimately involved in our lives when we invite The Creator to participate.

Jesus' *revelation*, the "good news" of the New Testament gospel, is that we are no longer apart from God, and God is not apart from us. *God's Divine Fragment in us* is a beacon guiding our own immature spirit. Having received our own spirit, we are literally spiritual sons and daughters of our spiritual Father, who has joined us in our life's struggles and joys and is available to us when we ask.

Imagine, no, *accept and know* that God, the source of all knowledge, all wisdom, all love, all benevolence, and all goodness and perfection is instantly and constantly available from within us when we ask. We are not apart from God — God is wholly available in us to guide us and draw us to him. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one," can be paraphrased for us as, "The Father as spirit, and I as spirit, live in this life as one spirit; the only condition required is that I must will to join with God, and then make decisions that demonstrate love in action." That can only occur through us if our concept of God is the same as Jesus'.

God waits in the timeless Eternal NOW for us to conceive of God as God really is, even if that takes us an *infinitely* long period of time. God waits with eternal patience. It is our task to conceive of God with the same clarity God understands us, no matter how long that takes. Only when we accept God as a loving God and understand God's benevolent relationship to the universe can we begin to effectively and powerfully invoke and emulate God's creative presence through our lives.

REVISING PAUL'S

INTERPRETATION of JESUS' LIFE and DEATH —

If we accept the Loving-God Theology and Jesus' own concepts of a loving God, we must reevaluate the purposes of his incarnation, life, and death. This may take us aside in our discussion but in the end it will give us a far broader understanding of how magnanimous and expansive God's love is for us as exemplified in Jesus' life.

Preliminary Issues. Why did a Son of God come to this planet in the life of Jesus? Why did he take the form of a human? Why did he take the hazardous challenge of developing from an embryo to a fully-grown man? Did he come to this planet for us only? Why did he die? Why did he die as he did? What purposes were served by his death? Was there any purpose at all? Was his death an awful, despicable action taken by vengeful men, rather than a requirement of a vengeful god?

In light of Jesus' loving-God concepts, what place do sacrifice, atonement, and redemption have as beliefs about an eternally loving God? Why were these concepts developed? What purpose did they serve when they were developed and accepted by Christendom? What purpose do they serve now?

All the reasons why Jesus, a Son of God, came to this planet may never be known that would help us more fully explain his life and death. Few writers have asked, "Did Jesus, as a Son of God, come into a human lifetime for any purpose that would aid his own spiritual evolution?" While answering this question would be outside the scope of this essay, making a vivid comparison may aid readers to more fully comprehend the gravity of what a Son of God did by coming to this planet.

The life of Jesus. When this Son of God came to our minuscule planet, he made the stunning transition from a timelessly-eternal spiritual being of unlimited intelligence and power to a fragile physical being with a limited physical lifetime of almost non-existent power and energy. What would it feel like for you or me to make a transition of similar magnitude? Imagine how you would feel and what your thoughts would be if you voluntarily made the transition from a fully mature, intelligent human as yourself to a newborn Dalmatian puppy. Or to a tadpole in a pond. Or to a worm in a rotten apple. Or to a leaf-eating caterpillar and then to a butterfly. Try to

put yourself into each of these situations as a conscious being of very limited awareness and intelligence. That's the kind of transition, but with even greater magnitude of difference, that this Son of God made when he moved from pure, all-powerful spirit into a physical embryo in Mary's womb.

It would be a profound understatement to say that he humbled himself as a Son of God to become a material human. By making the incredible transition from a co-creator in the universe into the form of a mortal, he humbled himself to a degree none of us can imagine for ourselves. Perhaps that is why, for nearly two thousand years, we have been struggling with the interpretation of his life, and why we still haven't grasped the magnitude of what he did and the reasons why.

What is more stunning is that Jesus came to teach us how to create a loving, co-creative relationship between our Creator and ourselves. That much seems obvious in light of his three-year ministry telling people about basic loving relationship skills that also would aid their spiritual journey.

The death of Jesus is a topic that is germane to more fully determine if the Loving-God Theology and Jesus' own loving-God concepts are applicable to the interpretation of his own death. Although Jesus said a good deal about the nature of God and *knew far ahead about his death*, he said nothing *in his own words* about it in terms of sacrifice, atonement, or redemption. Paul, on the other hand, had a lot to say about the life and death of Jesus. Let's begin by reviewing what Paul said, since he is the most influential early interpreter of Jesus' life and death. Remember, Paul had never met Jesus to have a discussion directly with him to understand clearly why all of these events took place!

For most of us, events that are many centuries old have lost their drama. How easily we forget what tremendous impact a meaningful event had upon the individuals who experienced it. Consider, for instance, the personal impact the death of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., the shooting of the Pope, Anwar Sadat, Indira Gandhi, John Lennon, or other notable public figure had on their immediate advisors, staff, supporters, family, and close friends. Consider your own reactions to a sudden or violent death of a family member or close friend.

Imagine that personal shock multiplied many times if you knew that the person you revered was a Son of God!

Play the role of Paul with me for a few moments. In order for us to understand how and why Paul interpreted the purposes of Jesus' life and his death as he did, we must become Paul and feel what Paul felt. Early on, Paul was known as Saul, a well educated Jew who fiercely persecuted the Christians. One day as he was on his way to Damascus, Saul had a spiritual experience. In an instant, he was in the center of a light so bright that it blinded him for three days. In the light he heard the words, "*Paul! Paul! Why are you persecuting me?*"

Stunned, but not incoherent, he asked in return, "*Who is speaking, sir?*"

And the voice replied, "*I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!*" [Acts 9: 3-20].

For those few moments, Saul was on the receiving end of a conversation with Jesus — the same Jesus who had already been killed by arrangements made by the Sanhedrin. In asking Saul this one question, all of Saul's questions and objections of Jesus' authenticity were answered. In doing so, Jesus had, metaphorically, let Saul see "the wiring under the board." Saul realized, 1) Jesus was who he said he was; 2) knowing this, he had to embrace and endorse the authenticity of Jesus and his ministry with the same energy that he had once denounced them. Saul was a converted believer. He was a new man, and he renamed himself Paul.

For Paul, the fact of Jesus' presence on earth as a Son of God was doubly profound: 1) Jesus was born on earth; and 2) Jesus died on earth. Remember, although Paul now supported the life and teachings of Jesus, his beliefs were deeply rooted in the Jewish culture, religion, and education. He had an immense faith in the power of God, his God. Now he had an immense faith in his Son, too. Paul was fully aware that God was all-powerful. Nothing could move against the powers of God in heaven or on earth. Neither could anything move against Jesus, since Paul knew that he was a Son of God. Yet, Jesus, as a human person was crucified on the cross.

Surely, Paul was profoundly puzzled with three overwhelming questions that needed to be answered: Why did a Son of God come to earth? Why

did God and Jesus allow himself to be crucified on the cross? God or Jesus, being all-powerful, could have stopped the development of events at any point in time. Why didn't they?

As Paul tried to unravel this immense problem, probably his next question was, "How could such a momentous, profound event NOT be willed by God, since God is all-powerful, knows all, and is present everywhere and could have easily stopped the crucifixion?" Paul would have heard about Jesus' own words while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "*My Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done*" [Luke 22: 42; Matthew 26: 39,42, 44; Mark 14: 36,39], which could be easily interpreted to mean, "God wanted it so." Because it was obvious that God *allowed* the death of Jesus to occur: *Paul must have concluded that God willed the death of Jesus*. Most people would have drawn the same, logical conclusion — and millions have!

Reviewing our earlier arguments, we know that God is love and all that God creates is of love. The death of Jesus was an event created by several men. God had nothing to do with Jesus' death because those men individually used their free will to make that decision. Many times daily, we live out the proof that we have free will and that God does not interfere in our decisions.

Again as Paul, you would probably form the next question, "Why was Jesus' death willed by God?" A lamp begins to flicker in Paul's head when came to the conclusion that Jesus must have died to **atone for the sins of mankind, and of individuals*. It seems logical, doesn't it? As Paul knew, individuals, even mankind, were regarded as wholly sinful.

*** atone - to atone for, expiate, propitiate, appease, make amends; redeem, repair, ransom, absolve, purge, shrive; do penance, pay the penalty; sacrifice, immolate-...,**

Paul would have said to himself, "It all fits! People are sinful; only Jesus a Son of God is without sin. The answer to why a Son of God came to earth and died as he did was to wipe away the sins of all people by the sacrifice of his life."

This answer made perfect sense to Paul. Sacrifice was in keeping with Hebrew history and Jewish religion. In very early Jewish history, individuals were sacrificed. Later, animals were substituted to atone and appease

God for the sins committed by individual believers or by the tribe. It would have been logical then for Paul to accept the idea that the crucifixion of Jesus was a *sacrifice*. "What a relief," Paul must have said, "Jesus did die for a reason! He is our Savior!"

Further, the logic of the sacrificial concept also fits neatly with the ancient Hebrew God-concept: A wrathful, vengeful god, whose love was conditional and needed to be appeased. For centuries, that was the god that Jewish believers and Paul recognized and worshipped, and is, even today, the god of contemporary Judaism and traditional Christianity.

Paul's logic was tight, with what appeared to be no holes or flaws. It fit historically. It fit Jewish religious and cultural history. Further, it fit the needs of the followers of Jesus, and as importantly, the needs of new believers to understand why Jesus, a Son of God, died on this planet. At the time, Paul's answer gave rationality to an otherwise irrational, illogical, and unreasonable event of immense personal and theological proportions. But, today, we know these explanations are truly irrational and illogical. God did not will his Son's death, but allowed it to occur.

A RATIONALIZATION AND JUSTIFICATION FOR PAUL'S INTERPRETATION —

The mortal death of Jesus, according to Paul, is an historical interpretation we know well. Paul's interpretations were developed from very immediate, sincere, personal, cultural, and educated perspectives. The Old Testament concepts of God used by Paul restricted his interpretation of the events of Jesus' life and death. Paul's interpretation was appropriate in light of his cultural heritage, religious indoctrination, and education, and from the *revelation* he received on the way to Damascus.

For Paul, what else could the death of Jesus be than a sacrifice that appeased God and atoned for the sins of all mankind? In his time, the death of Jesus as a sacrifice was a reasonably obvious conclusion. All these factors led him to interpret the death of Jesus as he did. Most anyone at that time would have come to the same conclusion.

The effect of Paul's interpretation was an immediate healing for Jesus' followers and new believers. Though the violent murder of Jesus aroused

self-hatred in believers for their associated involvement in the crime, Paul's interpretation reconciled this horrific event. His interpretation provided a new paradigm for belief that has lasted two millennia. No small feat at all! It provided Jesus' followers with a belief and faith that transcended the death of Jesus and the Apostles, and prevented the fragmentation of the early Christian movement. Paul's interpretation of Jesus' death was needed then to affirm and assure believers their relationship with God was at peace— that the tearing of the God-individual relationship was reconciled.

PAUL'S MOST OBVIOUS MISTAKE OF LOGIC —

Paul's most obvious mistake of logic was that he failed to apply Jesus' own message of a loving God to Jesus' death, and compounded his mistake when he failed to remove his Jewish beliefs from his interpretation of Jesus' death. Paul failed to grasp how immediately and directly applicable Jesus' message of God's unconditional, unwavering, eternal love was to Jesus' own death. It seems obvious and inescapable now *that Jesus' revelation of God's true nature must be used to interpret Jesus' own life and death!*

Paul's second mistake of logic involved a broad assumption he made about "the will of God." It appears that Paul became caught up in the emotional drama of Jesus' death, which caused him to overlook another very serious error in his interpretation. Paul correctly concluded that God allowed the death of Jesus, but *Paul incorrectly assumed that God actively willed Jesus' death to occur*, as though it were a part of Jesus' mortal life plan to end that way. What Paul didn't see was that God allowed Jesus' death to occur *by not willing to intervene* in the development of events that precipitated Jesus' death. Neither God nor Jesus intervened because doing so would have violated the will-decision of the men who decided to have Jesus killed.

Just as Paul assumed that Jesus' death was an expression of God's active will, *we can as easily assume it was an expression of God's passive will*. It is logical to conclude that the death of Jesus was willed by God, and reasonable to conclude that it was passively willed to occur, *but not actively willed to occur*.

Paul's third mistake of logic is a continuation of the erroneous traditional Hebrew belief that our actions toward God can change God's performance for or against us: Our sinfulness will change God's nature of loving and compassionate forgiveness to anger and wrath; and, our actions to appease God's anger and wrath can return God's loving, forgiving behavior toward us. In effect, these two situations set up a relationship of manipulation between people and God. These two situations make God look like a naïve, doddering old fool.

Paul's mistake was that he continued to see God's love for His human children as conditional. Paul compounded his error by setting God up as the creator of the sacrifice needed to save the world — by giving up His Son to death and suffering! That is both illogical and irrational.

The reality of The Eternal Creator is that God's love for us is unconditional. God forgives us because that is an aspect of love — compassion and mercy — and that does not change! Therefore, there is no need for sacrifice of any kind. The reality of our Eternal Creator is that he so loved the world that he provided His Son to live among us, giving us an example of how to live.

THE DEATH OF JESUS AS A MANAGEMENT DECISION —

Remembering, *"I and the Father are one,"* (John 10: 30), the death of Jesus must have involved a shared management decision by God and his Son. We have already discussed and have come to the conclusion that Jesus and God had a close association for perhaps billions of years. In other words, they knew each other extremely well, and had a close, ongoing, and long-term working relationship. We can take for granted that they had discussed the Son's mission as Jesus' on this planet and knew well in advance what the probable outcomes of his life would be. It is predictable, even by humans with a fair knowledge of Jewish and Roman culture and law, that Jesus would be killed for his proclamations, insubordination, and refusal to submit to the demands of Jewish authorities.

What would be the implications if Jesus did not follow the flow of events to his death? What would be the implications if he followed the events to his death as he did? What would one option say about God that the other

did not? Either situation would be open to interpretation. Either situation could be misconstrued. What would be the lesser hazard with the potential for the greater benefit? Obviously, God and Jesus decided that the "least damage, most benefit" option would occur by Jesus' voluntary participation in the events, which led ultimately to his physical death.

Option #1: God actively willed Jesus to go to earth and die upon the cross as a sacrifice to Himself for the sins of mankind, as traditional Christians believe. This option is contrary and inconsistent with Jesus' loving-God concept and the singular, loving nature of God. It is not a choice the perfect and loving, supreme and ultimate Creator of the universe would make because it is less than a perfect solution a loving, benevolent Creator would choose.

Option #2: God passively willed (allowed) Jesus to die by accepting the will-decisions of the individuals involved, and Jesus concurred. This option agrees with God's plan for self-willed creatures and ironically provides the best example of a totally consistent, loving Creator.

The only two aspects of will that God can be accused of in the murder of Jesus was that a) he originally willed each self-willed creatures' will to be sovereign and inviolable, and b) he willed not to interfere in the events leading to and including Jesus' death. Jesus even discussed this issue with his Father and concurred with both aspects of God's will. We know this by his words, "*My Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done,*" [Luke 22: 42; Matthew 26: 39,42, 44; Mark 14: 36,39].

At any time that Jesus was on the cross he could have changed the events and rescued his material body from the cross. God could have done that, too. But neither did. *God allowed those terrible events to take place because He limited Himself to act* — upholding the sovereignty and inviolability of human will-decisions.

GOD'S COMMITMENT TO THE INVIOABILITY OF OUR DECISIONS —

Primary to this non-traditional Christian interpretation is the sincere earnestness of God's original commitment not to interfere with the

individual or collective decisions of his human children, even when that meant the mortal death of his Son! That is a testimony to the commitment God has for the sovereignty of the will of his creatures and the expression of their will. God's non-interference in the developments leading to Jesus' death proved that he is not a manipulator of our lives but a sincere creator.

What this means for us is that we are fully and totally responsible for our decisions, choices, and actions. The wonderful aspect of this interpretation is that it is in tune with the consistent, eternal, unconditional loving nature of God: To create exceptional results using love. This is total confirmation of the accuracy of Jesus' concept of God that he gave to us.

In the play of our self-will, which God has granted as inviolate, we are responsible for our decisions. God does not interfere. Yet we see and know that God is involved in our lives daily in many ways. How can this occur? Look at it from a parent's perspective: A child must be raised to learn to become a fully responsible adult in a larger society. And though the parent allows the child to make decisions, some of which are harmful to himself and sometimes to others, the parent is nonetheless left to clean up the consequences of the child's actions. It is not much different from the havoc we inflict in our lives and the lives of others, leaving God to bring peace, harmony, and love into expression. God provides an abundance of options for thought, choices, and actions to us, but never interferes in our choices or our actions.

The men who murdered Jesus did so through the despicable and selfish expression of their wills. They put their will before God's. God's will implies benevolence. Therefore, all acts that are not benevolent are not a reflection of God's will. They were not manipulated by God to kill Jesus. They, alone, are responsible for the murder of Jesus. The individual will of the perpetrators of this crime took precedence over God's will. God created humans with free will, and did not, would not, and will not abrogate man's will, even when that meant the mortal death of his Son.

As a Son of God, Jesus proved his perfect obedience by not thwarting the will of his murderers and his Father's will. Under similar circumstances, does man have a right to defend himself? Yes, and under different

circumstances, Jesus would have done so. But he had a point to make: God does not interfere with man's will. God does not break his own rules.

Jesus' acceptance of the decisions of the individuals who arranged his murder was as powerful a statement as ever could be made to all the universe that God's love is benign, consistent, unwavering, eternally and universally benevolent, and unconditional; and that God will not interfere in the expression of the will of any individual, no matter what circumstances may be involved. There could not have been a more personal, profound, and poignant demonstration of non-interference for our will-decisions. Further, there could not have been a more powerful and poignant statement about the ultimate responsibility that we have for our decisions and our actions.

SACRIFICE, ATONEMENT, AND REDEMPTION REMOVED —

Within the Jesusonian-Christian set of beliefs of God based on the premise God is love and loves us eternally, consistently, and unconditionally, there is no room for the traditional concepts of sacrifice, atonement, and redemption. Those concepts and the subsequent human guilt and shame associated with the need for Jesus' death to wipe away the sins of mankind have frozen Christendom's ability to conceive of higher, more spiritual and reliable concepts of God. It is time to relinquish these aged interpretations in order for us to accept the truer God-concept: GOD IS LOVE. We cannot put the new wine of Jesus' loving-God concept into the old skin of traditional Judeo-Pauline-Christian theology.

Traditional Christian beliefs about God in effect indict God as a manipulative murderer of his own Son. Doesn't the belief that God sent his Son to his death as appeasement and atonement for the sins of mankind, whom God created, amount to an indictment of murder? God did not manipulate men to assassinate His Son. Would any loving father manipulate others to kill his son? No, not even a neglectful, indifferent human father would do that. So, it is inconceivable that a loving God would send his Son to die as a persuasion to Himself to forgive the sins of mankind He created. That is irrational.

God is not a heinous god, but a God of love and tenderness. He allowed His Son to go to earth, which for us would be a humiliating experience of

profound proportions if we were in God's "emotional space" as a supreme and perfect spiritual being. No, God did not require the death of His Son. That was the work of unenlightened individuals. It was not the responsibility of mankind, the Jews, and certainly not of God.

As fathers and mothers, we forgive our children many wrongs and hurts because children don't have the awareness, the consciousness, to know that what they do is wrong. Jesus understood this, too, when he said, "Forgive them, Father, for they don't know what they're doing." Would our heavenly Father do any less? Never. God's love is so eternally and universally constant and complete that there is no need for sacrifice to buy His forgiveness. Forgiveness is ours immediately when we sincerely forgive others who we believe have harmed us.

CHRISTIAN SHAME AND GUILT —

Unfortunately, what hasn't healed is the guilt and shame of traditional Christian believers who continue to accept Paul's interpretation of the death of Jesus. The rationalization for this guilt and shame is that mankind is so sinful that it required no less than the death of a Son of God to atone for the individual and collective sins of mankind. That is the carry-over of Paul's interpretation that hasn't been healed yet, and won't be healed until Christians accept Jesus' loving-God concept rather than the Old Testament concept of a wrathful God.

Even today, the guilt and shame of Jesus' murder, death, and sacrifice overwhelm many believers, especially during the Easter season. For many, their guilt is almost insurmountable: Guilt for sins committed; guilt for sins not yet committed; guilt for sins that surely will be committed since we are sinful and without possibility of not sinning until we pass from this lifetime; guilt for the associated sins of others, guilt for the sins of humanity; and on and on.

We no longer need to feel guilty, individually or as the race of humanity for Jesus' death. Though we mourn his death and despise the actions of his murderers, we can accept the occurrence of his death just as Jesus accepted it, without guilt or anguish.

With a Loving-God Theology and Jesus' own loving concepts of God, traditional Christian theology is cleansed of the toxic shame, guilt, and even embarrassment that millions of believers have felt. We no longer need to kneel and bow in shame and guilt. We can stand beside Jesus, basking in the radiance of our Creator-Mother-God's almighty, eternal, and constant light of love. We are His children and we have a clear way home. We are wanted and we are needed in God's great universe. Nothing stands in our way except our reluctance to wholeheartedly embrace God's eternal, unconditional love.

TWO CONTINUING ERRORS MAINTAINED BY MOST CHRISTIANS —

Two major errors maintained by most Christians, and originated by Paul, are 1) their undiscerning acceptance of the Old Testament beliefs in the nature of God; and 2) their disbelief and untrusting acceptance of Jesus' new revelation about the true, loving nature of God, our mutual Father-Mother-Creator.

It is unfortunate enough that most Christians continue to accept Old Testament beliefs of the nature of God, but the error of that belief is compounded immensely by their seemingly adamant refusal to believe what Jesus said about the true nature of God. It is as though millions of believers since the death of Jesus have missed the point of his life: *God truly loves us, individually, personally, and intimately without any conditions.*

If we cannot accept that God truly loves us, how can we emulate the life of Jesus, and apply his words of guidance to live our lives more peacefully, lovingly, and effectively? We cannot. And if we cannot do this, then we cannot truly and effectively apply the power, light, and love of God through our own lives. Thus, we limit our inherent potential to express, live, and demonstrate that love and energy through our lives for ourselves, our fellow brothers and sisters, and our planet.

Jesus' life was a demonstration of loving relationships: With his Father (our Creator), with his followers, with his persecutors, with his murderers, and with us. If we do not accept his new revelation about the true, loving

nature of God, then we will be unable to apply his life as a living example of what sacred relationships are all about: Living the example of loving relationships for ourselves and for others.

When we accept his revelation about the true nature of God, we then empower all the God-spirit potential that exists in us to express and demonstrate Jesus' example of loving relationships in our own lives. Any inconsistency in our beliefs about God causes misalignments between our will to create and the energy of the universe to fulfill our statements to create. Our relationship to the Creator will be out of alignment and our relationship to the energies God provided in the universe for us to use will be out of alignment, whether that is to create loving relationships with others, or simply to improve the content and context of our lives.



III

A Socially Sustainable Christian Religion

Religions and Churches

EIGHT QUESTIONS –

1. How did religions and churches come into existence? Long ago, and even today, people have looked into the depths of the astral heavens at night and asked the big questions, “How did it all begin? What or who made all of this? What and who is God? Where do I fit in?” This is the beginning of wonderment and discovering God outside and then the Presence of God within.

Their questions arose through the urging of their Divine Fragment. This fragment is quite literally the pilot within us who is continuously showing, guiding, leading, urging, and enlightening the way toward God. When we acknowledge the yearning that develops within us to become closer to God by ritual or ceremony, and to be like God, we have begun the practice of religion.

Early religious practices and religions came into existence when people attempted to satisfy their deep yearning for a close relationship, even the embrace and union, with The Creator that brought their world into existence. They asked questions, deep questions, as to how their world came into existence, and they wondered who did that great thing.

As in the beginning of all relationships, sometimes the going is rather rocky and uncertain, tentative and unsure, but if there is sincere searching for answers within, then Truth becomes discovered and the relationship deepens in meaning. Relationships develop naturally when the two people are interested in a relationship with each other. It is best when the relationship is intimately personal, which is something Divine Fragments strive to achieve. Yet, not everyone is able to achieve this level of intimacy, whether between themselves and another person, or with God.

Historically, those who have asked deep questions have often received deep answers and also the deep emotional connection that occurs when they come into personal contact with God, in a “God moment,” with their Divine Fragments. In the past, those who received such contact became excited, often began to worship God, and founded religions to help others have a similar relationship. Over time, the religions' rituals and rules began to crowd out the personal relationship and experience they were meant to initiate and support.

2. What is God's relationship to churches? Churches are organizations and have no soul, no personality, and no survivability factor to continue their existence after members leave. It is the individual that God loves.

In a church filled with God-conscious individuals, God is present in a capacity that most cannot understand. God's presence is powerful, even palpable in the hearts of those present. When church rituals infuse fellowship, communion of souls, and friendship, know that God is present. God is the multiplying factor in the communion of individuals when they seek to worship God, to find joy in God's presence, and to find God's presence in others. God is that factor that raises the ante of commitment when you feel exalted in your rituals. It is God in you that flows out to all others.

Churches are not necessary to worship God, but the fellowship and friendship that is shared in churches are a powerful force where God can work effectively to uplift downcast hearts. Churches are a place where individuals go with the intention of sharing themselves with God, where they can receive God in peace, in love, in fellowship, and in communion with others. Yes, churches are not God's concern but they are places that allow people to come together, and that is what has enriched poor hearts and souls with eternal love.

3. What is the intention for participating in a God-centered religion? To worship God, to get to know God better, and to develop a personal relationship with God as a friend and companion.

4. What goals do God-centered religions have? To help church members communicate with God and to worship God.

5. Why do most religions seem to die? The point of a religion's decline begins when it narrowly interprets how its followers should practice their faith and their relationship with God. When that happens, it is based on an incomplete set of information about that relationship. When individuals have a meaningful contact with God, they often believe that they have found the one and only way to relate to God. But that is only one of many ways.

Because the Presence of God is within each one of us, each of us could have our own religion with our own personal religious practices for being in relationship with God. Some of those practices aid our relationship with God and some do not. Those who desire to be in relationship with God need only be pragmatic. What to do is simple — be with God. Share your time with God as you would another friend. Talk to God as you walk in a park, along a river, down the street, or as you do your daily chores.

Though God is The Creator, God is always our friend, first. We can have a personal relationship with God if we want one. It is on the personal basis that God is in relationship with you.

6. What is God's relationship to religions? Some people believe that their religion is the chosen religion or that they are special people for being members of that religion. Yet, God is not in the business of picking and choosing among or between individuals or religions. God has already chosen each one of us, whether we are religious or not. God has given each of us the opportunity to have a personal relationship as Mother/God-child and as Father/God-child. God has given every one of us the opportunity to choose to become a real, active, and important part of the universe. No one is forgotten and no one is unimportant to God.

Look at it from God's perspective—God desires to have a religious experience with each of us. That is, God desires to be in personal relationship with each of us and has done the largest share of the work to begin and to support that relationship. The First Source and Center of the universe invested a fragment of Itself in each of us. That fragment is not dormant but active, though it is not intrusive to our conscious thinking.

God does not tell you, "Go to the temple and worship," but God does open windows of awareness for you to look through to the other side where

God is, to be in personal relationship, if you choose. This is the beginning of having a religious experience with God, and God with you. But you must choose, as in any relationship, to participate.

7. What about people who do not believe God exists? After we pass through our brief lifetime, we will arrive in the resurrection halls of the next immediate spiritual, non-material dimension. There, we will begin remedial classes and review our lifetime and learn the lessons we missed. Those who believe God may exist but don't think God is relevant or that there is no proof to support a belief in God's existence will be given full awareness of the universe as it truly exists, after they arrive. Then, with full awareness of the choices of their life in the universe, they can make a choice of whether to be a part of it or not. Once we become fully aware of all the potential consequences of those decisions, we then become fully responsible for the decisions we make.

8. Would God ever "pull the plug" on anyone? No one leaves their existence without making a conscious decision, with full awareness that it is no one else's decision but his or her own. To leave their existence requires a personal decision with full knowledge of the consequences of that decision. Every aspect of our existence is personal to God, who aids us in our long spiritual career to find It. God's ability to experience the universe is diminished when The Creator's human children decide not to participate in the experience of Creation. It is not God who "pulls the plug" but the individual who decides not to continue his or her infinite ascendant journey toward perfection and the First Source and Center of the universe.



Designing A Socially Sustainable Christian Church

INTRODUCTION —

The colossal centuries-old marketing mistake of Christian churches is that they did not have a strategic marketing plan in place. That is completely understandable because for 1,500 years the hierarchy of needs of their audiences had not changed much. Today, the hierarchy of needs of contemporary believers has changed considerably.

In designing a sustainable organization of any type to remain in sustainable existence, we must have a strategic marketing plan that includes tying the longevity of the organization to human motivation.

Please see: ADDENDUM, “Human Motivation,” page 96, especially “Values, Value Interpretations, Hierarchies of Need, and Social Change.”)

Briefly, what has occurred over the centuries of the existence of the Christian church is that the circumstances of life have changed immensely for believers. The Industrial Revolution, world wars, the encroachment of materialism into all areas of life, multiple social and entertainment distractions, and many others have shifted the hierarchies of need for billions of people from the quiet lives they once had to the hustle and complexity of contemporary living. For centuries, the hope of an afterlife helped people endure the burdens of survival, but once survival was assured millions of people began leaving the church.

Today they seek the means to make their lives easier, particularly in their personal and social environments. The values are the same as our ancient ancestors, but the interpretations we give to them has changed radically.

The church has failed to adapt to serve the changing needs of believers. The Christian church needs a strategic multi-millennia marketing plan.

A strategic marketing innovation. Historically, religions have put their own “hype” and “spin” on social innovations to identify them with the church. They are under the assumption that “branding” will give them social identity that they can build on. The same occurs with other organizations, whether they are commercial entities or others. Few have taken on the marketing strategy to provide a neutral, unbranded service to the public that serves the good of everyone. That would mean providing a service that serves the hierarchy of needs of believers and their public audience WITHOUT it being identified with the name of their church organization.

For contemporary couples and singles with families that would mean providing a service for the parents and children, as the children will probably become parents at some point in their life. The greatest need of contemporary societies is social stability, families that produce socially competent and responsible children, and a multi-generational program to achieve those ends. Consider the program discussed below that is more suited for an altruistic venue than a public agency.

CLINICS for SUSTAINABLE FAMILIES ³ —

What is proposed in this section is the establishment of “Clinics for Sustainable Families” within Christian churches. The “Clinic” is a program of intentional epigenesis that carries forward the best practices of parenting, child reading, and family dynamics. While the program of the Clinic is secular and applicable to any altruistic organization, the predominant culture of the organization can provide an overlay to color the context of the program.

The mission of Clinics for Sustainable Families is to provide a permanent resource in each community for the enculturation of socially sustainable child rearing and parenting practices. The work of the Clinics is to support the capability of caring and nurturing parents who are interested in their children growing into socially competent, responsible,

³ The title and the text of this section are adaptations from my earlier paper, *Epigenesis and Clinics for Sustainable Families — Catalysts for Transgenerational Culture Change*, that is fully applicable to Christian Church organizations. Available as a PDF from the author, or at www.Academia.edu

and resourceful adults. Because the mission of the Clinics is to bring about social stability and eventually social sustainability without a religious, political, cultural, or ethnic bias, *the work of the Clinics could be easily adopted by any social institution, organization, or agency* with the altruistic mission to uplift the social condition of individuals, families, and communities.

The social benefit of these programs will become apparent as their effectiveness becomes evident in the first generation and highly visible in subsequent generations: Parents will have happier and more contented children, parents will be more confident because they are seeing their children become happier, more contented, and socially responsible. The family wins because the dynamics of the family are functional and constructive. The community and the larger society win because their citizens provide for a more stable social existence. And lastly, society and all organizations are provided with future generations of socially functional decision-makers who are capable of devising options, choices, decisions, and courses of implementation using the seven values of our species to support families and communities more effectively.

Traditional Christian churches have largely failed to market themselves as being practically useful to individuals and families of contemporary societies. Traditional Christian church organizations have not integrated themselves into the function of contributing to the sustainability of their host communities, societies, and nations. Solely addressing the religious faith-needs, and spiritual enlightenment of their members once satisfied large populations, but not today.

Their declining membership is directly connected to their failure to link themselves to a practical, transgenerational program to address the social needs of individuals and families to resolve their daily living challenges within their families. The Clinics for Sustainable Families is such a program that teaches childrearing, parenting, and family dynamics to every new generation, using the best practices from cultures around the world. When Christian churches make this link, they will become a vital, permanent social institution in every community that has the capability of meaningful social contributions to the social stability and sustainability of those communities and societies.

To become truly sustainable, Christian churches must tie their existence to the social sustainability of the family. The social institution of the family is a never-ending producer of new generations, generations that need to be taught and trained with the skills of parenting and child rearing. Each new generation provides a new audience for enculturating the best practices of parenting, child rearing, family dynamics, social competency, and social responsibility.

OVERCOMING RECURRING SOCIAL DYSFUNCTION —

The problem of dysfunctional families and dysfunctional societies could be viewed as a “chicken or the egg” conundrum as to which one develops functionality or dysfunctionality in the other. In reality, it is neither. It is my estimation that there never has been a self-sustaining society that influenced the family to also become self-sustaining; and the family has never been a truly self-sustaining social institution to influence societies to also become self-sustaining.

In the language of social sustainability, there is a symbiotic relationship between families and societies. Sometimes this is a positive relationship and sometimes it is forgotten and left by the wayside of social change. The intention in this article ⁴ is to present and provide the means for families to become the primary influence for societies to evolve and become socially sustainable.

The crux of the problem is that communities, societies, civilizations, and all of their respective social institutions came into existence without a conscious intention for their continuing existence and what they were to become. As history has so clearly shown, societies and nations came into existence, bloomed, crested, declined, collapsed, and disappeared into the strata of archeological detritus. ⁵ To take the initiative of consciously improving the functioning of families as socially sustainable and capable of contributing to the sustainability of community and society would be a first for all time.

⁴ Ibid, *Epigenetics and Clinics for Sustainable Families — Catalysts for Transgenerational Culture Change*.

⁵ Diamond, Jared 2005 *Collapse – How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*
Viking, Penguin Group, New York
Diamond, Jared 1997 *Guns, Germs, and Steel — The Fates of Human Societies*
W. W. Norton Co., New York

Yes, it will take generations to prove the potential of socially sustainable families to effect major culture changes in societies. However, not taking any initiative would provide the assurance that our communities, societies, and nations will fail as assuredly as all have failed in the past, leaving generations in desperation, when we could have given them a better condition for their lives.

What is proposed is the establishment of Clinic programs in Christian churches to teach parents how to use positive and constructive “early life influences” to give their child huge advantages to survive and thrive as they grow into adulthood. Though most parents want the best for their children, it is rare for parents to know what the child can reply upon in later years to serve them well when they are on their own.

A new social institution. To fulfill the possibility of democratic societies becoming stable, peaceful, and eventually socially sustainable, a new social institution is needed that enculturates each new generation with the best practices of conscious and sustainable child rearing and parenting. Though one generation may learn these skills and pass them on to their children, there is no assurance that over generations those best practices will be retained. *Because these skills are learned and not hereditary, they need to be intentionally refreshed in each new generation.*

Epigenesis. The child care and parenting programs of Clinics would provide parents-to-be, parents, and grandparents with positive child care influences, i.e. skills, that will imprint their child’s DNA, (biologic epigenesis) giving him or her the capability to develop a positive attitude toward life and an anticipation of successes in their life. The imprint is made on the child’s DNA through the instructions of parents and others give to young children in the form of advice, direction, guidance, counsel, instructions, exhortations, and admonishments to the child, and particularly when it is done several times over the course of their lives.

Transgenerational. The epigenetic DNA imprint created in one generation will carry over to the next generation, but begins to fade with succeeding generations. To aid each generation those skills and the DNA imprint must be “refreshed” with each new generation requiring Clinics to become a permanent institution in every community, much like schools of public education. The intentions are multiple, but essentially churches with Clinics would provide a positive, multi-generational benefit to new families, communities, and societies.

After numerous generations, it is quite possible that continued imprinting with these best practices would make the imprint more and more indelible. The long term benefit would be the creation of a tremendously supportive social environment for individuals, families, and whole societies. The alternative is a continuation of what we are seeing across America, social dysfunction in more social strata of our society from the most indigent to the most affluent. The alternative is to do nothing and let the worst practices of our societies — criminality, violence, and general disregard for the value of others — to continue to embed deeper and deeper into our democratic culture and the DNA of our children.

Knowing what we know about the history of societies, our own society, and the obvious signs of the moral and social decay of our society, we are now witnessing the societal decline that always anticipates social collapse. Knowing what we know about the incredible adaptability and durability of our species, and the values that have supported our species' long existence, we must look at our options, make a choice, invoke a decision, and implement the best practices of our social existence — and transcend the long history of all failed societies. It is doable.

Sources of Child Rearing Wisdom. If we are to create a culture change that provides for the safe social evolution of democratic societies, humbly it must begin within families and the enculturation of each new generation. Discovering the sources of *best practices* of child rearing and parenthood would go far to help produce children who grow into adulthood to become socially responsible and competent citizens, innovators, leaders, and decision-makers.

Every culture has a set of best practices that while being cultural are also universally applicable in all cultures. Raising children who are peaceful, socially responsible, and reasonably contented with life is not a miracle but the result of conscientiously applying the best practices of child rearing and parenting. Children who are raised with the best practices of parenting and child rearing are far better prepared to integrate the tenets of spiritual enlightenment than children raised in dysfunctional families.

Among every generation of children around the world there are many who have become well adjusted, functionally social, contented, and curious from having been raised by caring and loving parents who somehow knew how to raise their children that way. I truly believe that the wisdom of sound child rearing and parenting practices already exists but simply needs to be collected, organized, collated, and made

assertively available in each local community. Discovering what Jesus had to say about parenting, child rearing, family dynamics, and growing up with a God consciousness would be highly useful bridge between the Clinic program and the religion OF Jesus. Discovering and implementing best practices from all sources would have a profound effect on the civility of our communities and societies, our politics and government operation, as well as financial and economic equity.

Perhaps the most convincing evidence of successful child rearing and parenting skills is in the lives of well adjusted adults in hundreds of cultures around the world waiting to be revealed in field research and a survey of social science research studies. A search for that wisdom would include almost two centuries of social science research, including the work of Margaret Meade whose early research of indigenous cultures could guide our search today.

Though there already exist many parenting and child rearing books, manuals, and articles, none were based on the seven values that have sustained our species. Discovering and validating the best practices of child rearing using those values would result in a *universal* parenting guide that would be applicable to all people of all races, ethnic groups, cultures, religions, and political preferences, without the inherent bias and self-interest of those groups. A universal, multi-cultural guide of those “best practices” would help new parents in all nations raise their children without guessing or assuming they already knew.

A SUSTAINABLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH ORGANIZATION —

A caution is advised: When considering the development of a sustainable Christian religion and sustainable church organizations, it is vital that one not confuse the other in order for each to stay true to their separate functions. They are distinctly different from each other, though sharing common values and interests. The religion OF Jesus is based on a belief system that will endure for millennia with or without a man made organization. The challenge here is to design a socially sustainable church organization that has the capability of remaining in existence as an effective and functional organization, not because of the religious faith of its followers, but because it was designed to be self-sustaining.

RE-INVENTING CHRISTIANITY
AS A SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Societies and communities are not organizational entities, but amorphous aggregates of organizations and groups of people. Because of that, attempts to move a society toward social sustainability will fail until *organizations* become invested in the values of sustainability as the criteria for their decision-making.

The illustration below describes the social symbiosis that develops in communities and societies that have chosen to move toward social sustainability. The most powerful organizations are those within the three pillars of a functional society: Social-societal, (where church organizations exist), political-governmental, and economic-financial.



For a society that wants and needs to become socially sustainable, how does the church organization fulfill its moral obligation to support the social sustainability of the family/individual, community, and society?

Historically, church organizations have simply relied upon religious beliefs as sufficient to convince the individual and families to come to church in order to achieve a better life and to assure their “reward in heaven.” That simple marketing tactic is no longer effective. What has been missing from Christianity and related forms of belief is a strategic multi-century marketing plan that places the church organization as the most relevant institution, except for the family, in their lives and in their local community.

The enduring strategic marketing plan would need to incorporate a multi-generational service-delivery system that improves the quality of life of the individual and families while also providing for their spiritual growth and enlightenment. By installing a Clinic for Sustainable Families within the organizational function of church organizations they can be assured of a perennial audience with each new generation.

What bonds the religion, church organization, and the Clinics together are the seven values that have sustained our species. When those values become the values for decision-making in church organizations, they will be able to adapt their functions to the needs of the individual/family, community, and society. When a church organization sees itself as a member of the major pillar of a functional society, as illustrated above, then their short term goals and long term mission become easily aligned.

PRIORITIES OF SUSTAINABILITY —

(See illustration above.)

In a society that is seeking social, political, and economic stability all organizations have a socially sustainable moral responsibility to support the social sustainability of their host communities and societies. This begins with supporting the development of functional, loving family environments.

1. **The ultimate priority** comes from the genetic mandate to sustain the species.
2. **The second priority is to sustain individuals/families** to support the continuity of our species and culture. In a society that has chosen to move toward social sustainability, efforts are made to support the maturing social evolution of family dynamics so that families socialize and enculturate next generations to support a socially sustainable society.
3. **The third priority** is dependent upon the willingness of organizations within communities and society to adopt socially sustainable values and practices to sustain the existence and continuity of sustainable communities and societies, beginning with the family/individual.

Contributions by organizations to individuals/families and communities have three symbiotic functions: 1) To aid the sustainability of the species; 2) To aid the sustainability of the individual/family/community; and, 3) To empower individuals, families and communities to reciprocate in that symbiosis by contributing their energies to the sustainability of their mutual society.

Societal sustainability becomes possible when organizations are designed to become sustainable, to stay in business, and make contributions to the continuity of communities and societies by contributing to the sustainability of individuals and families. This symbiosis is only sustainable when individuals and families also make decisions and take actions that support the social sustainability of the organizations of their communities and societies.

An example of an enduring “wisdom” to pass on to each new generation: What the illustration does not reveal is the innate capability of our species individually and collectively to adapt to changing conditions. This ability stems from our choice-decision to defer the gratification of our wants and needs to a later time and condition. That outcome becomes possible with the foresight to design goals for future completion that provide more fulfillment later than in the present moment. Yet, overcoming present uncertain and unpleasant circumstances to achieve future goals is not something every child is taught. It is a necessary choice-decision that can be learned, even by organizations. This is a “wisdom” that is not passed on genetically but shared from an older generation and learned by a younger generation.

ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN OF SUSTAINABLE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES —

Church organizations are no different from any other organization: They are man made, and almost always have their decisions based on a set of values that are almost always obscure, assumed, and unidentified by management and the organization’s governing body. As history has so abundantly demonstrated no secular organization has sustained its existence over the course of centuries. Few last longer than a few decades. The obvious conclusion from such a consistent history of failure is that

their decision-making was flawed, and the values for that decision-making were not those that promote longevity, sustainability.

Yet amidst that history of failure is one entity that has sustained itself for over 200,000 years, the Homo sapiens species. The general consistency of decision-making of the species has supported its sustainability to the present — consistent with that awareness are the values that have sustained that decision-making.

1. The first step is decide to design a sustainable Christian church organization with the embedded values that have sustained our species in the founding documents and organizational development of a Christian Church organization. The assumption in doing so is that the church organization would become similarly sustainable as our species in the term of many centuries and perhaps many millennia.

2. The second step is to actually embed those values into the organizational development of the church organization, whether that is solely a local church or an international church organization:

- **Vision statement.** What is the vision of the organization as qualified by the seven values? How does the vision statement incorporate the seven values of those who attend the church over the course of many centuries?
- **Intention statement.** Historically, this has been called the “purpose statement.” The reason for dissociating from “purpose” is to assure that there is no ambiguity for the existence of the organization and its functions.
- **Operational philosophy.** This is the statement of beliefs about the functioning of the organization that qualitatively guides the course of decision-making. Operationally, it is the philosophy that prevents the skewing of decision-making over time from the vision of the organization. Examples exist where daily decision-making was “within the margins” of being acceptable, but over time and thousands of such decisions, in the end the result can be contrary to the vision and intention of the organization.

These three elements provide the guidance for the organization to sustain its existence into a far distant future. For a Sustainable Christian Religion OF Jesus, the design of related church

organizations carry the burden of becoming as sustainable as His message.

- **Mission statement.** This is the operational obligation to implement and fulfill the vision statement and intention statement, while being guided by the operational philosophy. This is where the management and market planning come to bear upon daily operations.

- **Objectives.** These are the measurable operations of the mission statement defined, put into operation, empowered, and monitored.

3. The third step is to design the organization as a Type II, Double Loop Learning Organization. ⁶

In a Type I Single Loop Organization, when a mistake arises that produces results that are not acceptable, the problem is corrected. In a Type II, Double Loop Learning Organization, the incorrect results are examined to determine the originating causes of the problem; the causes are corrected; and the processes are monitoring to see if the cause of the problem was thoroughly corrected.

In the case of the erroneous, illogical, and irrational Pauline theology, the Church did nothing to correct the problem even though the Jesuits had long ago discovered the gross inconsistencies between the Pauline Theology and the true nature of God. That was a management decision within the organization for reasons that I am unaware. In a Type II, Learning Organization that has chosen to pursue a socially sustainable strategy to more accurately reflect the true nature of God, a problem as that would have been corrected as soon as it was discovered, whether as a complaint of believers or an academic within the organization.

Several authors of religious repute have written about the decline of the Christian church. It would be a wise option to examine those sources for the causes of the decline of membership in Christian churches. The goal for developing a sustainable design for the church organization is to assure that its mission is not compromised.



⁶ Argyris, Chris. 1985. *Action Science, Concepts, Methods, and Skills for Research and Intervention*.
Senge, Peter M., 1994. *The Fifth Discipline, The Art and Performance of the Learning Organization*.

Re-Inventing Christianity

INTRODUCTION —

It is rare that one can consciously and intentionally design a Christian religion. In reality it has never been done before. Any Christian religion that wishes to sustain itself for far more than two millennia must have four fundamental elements:

- 1) It must be a religion OF Jesus rather than about Jesus.
(See, “The Religion OF Jesus,” below.)
- 2) It must fully be in alignment with the values the Creator invested in our species. (See, “Seven Values Given by the Creator,” Page 86.)
- 3) It must be capable of germinating those values in each new generation and serving their ever-changing hierarchies of needs.
(See “Clinics for Sustainable Families,” page 74, and Addendum, “Values, Value-Interpretations, Human Needs, and Social Change,” page 99.)
- 4) It must be supported by an organization with a vision, intention, operating philosophy, mission, and objectives that are capable of sustaining that religion into a very far distant future.
(Chapter 9, “Re-Inventing Christianity.”)

THE RELIGION *OF* JESUS —

Juxtaposed to the religion OF Jesus is the religion ABOUT Jesus, known as “Pauline Christianity,” developed by the Apostle Paul. The benefit of Paul’s work and the inherent flaws of Paul’s work have already been discussed. The result of that discussion left us with the stripped-out hull of a nakedly nonviable set of beliefs **about** Jesus. For us today, the best

replacement would be the religion that Jesus himself practiced, the religion that he preached to his followers, the religion OF Jesus.

The simplicity of Jesus' religion is very appealing. Jesus spoke extensively about a way of living and making decisions that he called "the kingdom of God." This "kingdom" is a state of mind, an attitude, and consecrated determination of the individual to live their life in conscious alignment with God's plan for them. It begins with —

- First, the individual's supreme desire to do the will of God, and their unselfish love of man which yields the good fruits of improved ethical and moral conduct.
- Second, to maintain perennial faith and sincerity to submit to the doing of the Father's will without questioning and in the full confidence and genuine trustfulness of the Father's wisdom; to come into the kingdom free from prejudice and preconception; and to be open-minded and teachable like an unspoiled child.
- Third, to accept the equality of all others as we do for our self. Doing so, we recognize and honor the Fatherhood of God of us all, and the brotherhood of man.

When we examine these principles together, we see that Jesus' interest was in the sustainability of the soul of the individual through this lifetime and onward through their ascendant spiritual journey. As the will-decisions of mortals are inviolable, the values of our decision-making must be in alignment with the Divine Fragment for It to experience the process of living that produces a life that is becoming more and more like our Creator — perfect in every way.

The religion OF Jesus is completely congruent with the ends that our Creator wishes each of us to achieve. The oneness and integrity of those values, as we will soon see, provide the means to achieve those ends.

SEVEN VALUES GIVEN BY THE CREATOR —

To design a socially sustainable Christian religion requires us to return to the creation of our species. This is the beginning of all else that follows.

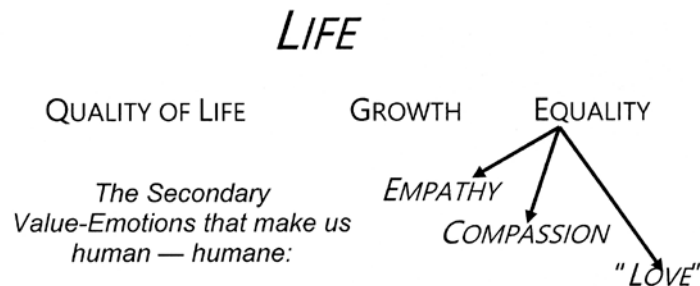
God The Creator. We have already established the fundamental belief that our species was brought into existence by God. It is not relevant that

this act of creation was evolutionary or by *fiat accompli*, instantly. It is sufficient to know that God brought us into existence. We also believe that in doing so, God knew what It was doing, and had created our species with all the “tools” to build an ever-improving personal relationship with the Divine Fragment that resides with us, and to become more perfect through our decisions.

Those “tools” are a set of values that have 1) sustained our species for over 8,000 generations; 2) motivated us individually and collectively to improve the quality of our lives that have resulted in social and material progress; 3) and are the values that allow us to become more perfect through moral, ethical, and service decisions. The result has every possibility of providing for the social evolution of our civilization while also providing each Father Fragment with the experience of living, as Its mortal child aspires to become more like The Creator.

THE SEVEN ORGANIC VALUES of OUR SPECIES —

THE VALUES THAT SUSTAIN FAMILIES, SOCIETIES, AND CIVILIZATIONS



NOTE: "Love" is in quotation marks because love is the value-emotion that points to: Honesty, truthfulness, respect, loyalty, devotion, faithfulness, recognition, acceptance, appreciation, validation, discretion, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, authenticity, vulnerability, genuineness, listening, supporting, sharing, consulting, confiding, caring, tenderness and many more; And these constitute the operational definition of love. (Source: *Sacred Relationships, A Guide to Authentic Loving*, Daniel Raphael, 1999)

LIFE, the Ultimate Value. *Life* is the ultimate value. It provides the pivotal element for the existence of the other six values as a *system of values*. Decisions made about life are qualified by the other six values that become the criteria for human decision-making, to express the highest values of human existence and our humanity.

The three primary values, (*quality of life, growth, and equality*), are organic to our species and are the original cause of human motivation. This motivation has resulted in material and social progress while also giving us the capability to sustain our species over thousands of generations.

The three secondary values, (*empathy, compassion, and "love"*), are also organic to our species and share the same characteristics as the three primary values. They exist in us as an impulse to do good. They are proof that people are innately good, and created that way! For example, we want peace for others as much as we want peace for ourselves because we are wired with the values that make us human – humane.

These seven values are integral and provide a holism of decision-making that motivates us to progress individually and collectively, while also reaching out to others who are less able or capable of doing so for themselves. These seven values create a oneness of humanity that is only violated by willful decision-making. They provide us with the capability to choose to grow into our innate potential in the seven spheres of human development: Physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural, and spiritual.

Quality of Life. While life is fundamental to survival and continued existence, it is the *quality of life* that makes life worth living and gives life meaning. In a democracy, access to the *quality of life* is provided when a person not only has an *equal* right to *life*, but that person also has an *equal* right to *growth* as anyone else. This is what makes immigrants so excited to move to a democracy — they seek freedom to experience the *quality of life* that makes life worth living — to control their own destiny and to explore their innate potential with the opportunities that a democratic nation provides.

Growth is essential for improving our quality of life. To be human is to strive to grow into our innate potential. Our yearning to grow ensures that our innate potential becomes expressed and fulfilled, and collectively encourages an improving quality of life for everyone that results in social progress.

This value ensures that the inherent potential of individuals, societies, and a civilization becomes expressed and fulfilled, which encourages an improving quality of life for everyone. Without growth, there would be

no possibility of social evolution and social sustainability. Once the population of our global civilization is balanced with our planet's natural resources, then growth has everything to do with improving the quality of life of individuals, rather than the quantitative growth of populations to support economic growth. Until then difficult moral decisions will have to be made that move our communities and societies toward that balance.

Equality is inherent in the value of life. We give equal value to each individual, and we would seek to provide more equitable opportunity to every individual to develop their innate potential, as we would our own. Even those with less potential than others have equal value to live life to explore, develop, and express the potential they do have. Without equality, life is a competition where the resources of one's living-potential is squandered in competitive warlike existence. Then there is no moral equity available.

The reason that we are so sensitive to issues of equality is that we have the innate capacity of empathy – to “feel” or put our self in the place of another and sense what that is like, whether that is in anguish or in joy. Feeling that, we want to act in compassion ⁷ – to reach out to the other and assist them in their plight.

Our motivation for equality is stimulated when we compare our own life to that of others and see that the quality of their life is “better” or “worse” than our own. Our sense of inequality then rises within us to motivate us to seek equality for us, and equality for them stimulated by our empathy and compassion for them.

We generalize empathy and compassion toward all of humanity with the term “Love” – the capacity to care for another person or all of humanity, as we would for our self.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE VALUES —

Self-Evident — The self-evident nature of these values is only one of several *characteristics* that have obscured their presence while in plain sight. These three primary values are self-evident similarly as those stated in the famous sentence in the United States Declaration of Independence,

⁷ <http://ccare.stanford.edu/stanford-compassionate-university-project/>

“We hold these truths (values) to be self-evident, that all [people] are created equal that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The proof of this becomes evident when people around the world are asked whether they would like to enjoy an improved quality of life, as they define it.

Universal — These values are also universal to all people of all races, cultures, ethnicity, nations, and genders. Ask anyone, whether they live in Bangladesh or Baltimore, Houston or Hanoi, or any other city if they would like to develop the innate potential they brought into life ... to improve their quality of life with an equal ability as anyone else would or could. The answers are universally the same whether a poor person is asked or a multi-billionaire. Everyone I have talked to as a holistic life coach has chosen to improve the quality of their life, and grow into their potential.

Irreducible — The three primary values are the superordinate values of our species and are not subordinate to any other values. The pursuit of an improving quality of life, growth, and equality provide the foundation for human motivation,⁸ as interpreted by the individual, and express themselves in a personal hierarchy of needs.

Organic / Innate / Timeless — Even though I cannot prove it, evidence seems to suggest that these seven values are organic to our species and have been embedded in our DNA from our earliest beginnings. They have motivated us, everyone, to yearn for the improvement of our quality of life materially and socially. We can safely predict that these same values will continue to motivate our species to enjoy an ever-improving quality of life, and to grow into our innate potential in future centuries and millennia.

THESE VALUES CREATE AN “ORGANIC” MORALITY⁹ —

Collectively these values provide a consistent means for making moral and ethical decisions. They provide a code of “organic morality” that is

⁸ Raphael, Daniel 2015, *Social Sustainability Handbook for Community-Builders*, p 28-30.

⁹ Raphael, Daniel. *ORGANIC MORALITY, Answering the Critically Important Moral Questions of the 3rd Millennium*. (An unpublished 91 page manuscript available as a PDF via email from the author.)

based on the values that are organic to our being, individually and universally. In the social context of a world that is changing rapidly, where predictability of the future is becoming less and less sure of what the next year and months bring to us, a timeless, universal organic morality as this is essential for sound decision-making using policies with predictable outcomes.

An evolved morality as this accepts and promotes the individual as having an intrinsic value to society. Such an evolved morality demonstrates the necessity of improving the quality of life for each individual to become a more valuable asset who can aid the progress of society. This is a proactive morality that adds value to the community as the individual proactively makes decisions that add sustainable value to their own life and their community. The same applies proactively when organizations make decisions in accord with these core values.

Cultures that understand this symbiosis will be well prepared to engage social sustainability because these values are integrative in nature, where the individual is seen as capable of influencing the whole as much as the whole influences the individual. This type of thinking values the circular, systems integrity of the family, community, and society. The individual exists in a relationship of connectedness, integration and inclusiveness, rather than separation and exclusiveness.

Quality, value-based thinking offers individuals the option of giving organic interpretations to their world. People are valued because they have the capacity to add quality-value to their community and society. Being valued, the community and society provide services to the individual and family all along the “continuum of life” to improve the capability of their social decision-making. With the above in mind, it becomes easier to see how this morality acts not only to preserve the quality-value of everyone, but proactively provides a more supportive social environment that adds value to the individual as an asset to their communities and societies. To increase the value of an individual’s contribution to society that individual must be seen as an asset whose value to society can be increased. The individual is an investment, an asset who can develop a “return on investment” for his or her family, community, and society.

By investing in the social sustainability of the family as the primary socializing and enculturating social institution in every community and society, the child-becoming-adult is prepared to use a code of sustaining morality. Investing in the social sustainability of individuals, beginning even before conception and continuing through the age of separation from the family, will assure the family, community, and dominant society of becoming socially sustainable. In this case, society must take on the vision of inventing and creating itself as socially sustainable through a new socially sustainable morality. Where better to teach a universal morality as this than in Christian churches?

Our planet is now in the throes of incredibly rapid global social change and the specter of rolling political, military, social, economic, and environmental calamities. A morality for this New Era of our planet now exists for guiding all decision-making, with the common goal of social stability by citizens, national leaders, and international leaders that makes global stability and peace possible.

For Christian religions to survive, they must take on the values that God incorporated in our species' evolutionary creation. That statement may sound "pushy" until we realize that our species was created by God, but all Christian organizations are man made and highly fallible. To counter that fallibility it would seem intuitive for organizations to adopt the values that were invested in our species as an intentional attempt to emulate The Creator's investment in us and carry Jesus' message forward with greater credibility. I truly believe that God knew what It was doing, and that has proven very successful. Maybe Christianity can do the same?

There are many obvious blank places that will need to be filled in, such as an organizational infrastructure, ceremonies, rituals, creedal or belief statements, and educational programs. Church organizers may examine the following belief system and fill in the blanks as they choose.

A SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE CHRISTIAN MORALITY —

With a morality that is based on the values that have sustained our species, we know that Jesus' message and morality becomes—

- Universally applicable to all people of every nation, culture, race, ethnicity, society, and gender;

- As relevant and applicable 5,000 years from now as it is today;
- An ideology that would be easily accepted by all people, without the implicit or explicit implication of an organizational agenda;
- A positive, constructive way of thinking, speaking, and acting by every individual at all levels of society or position of authority;
- The hope of improved quality of social relations between individuals, organizations, and governments;
- Easily understood and useful to almost anyone, literate or not;
- Proactive to promote peace, social stability, and the social evolution of individuals, families, communities, societies, and nations to become socially sustainable.

SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES —

Any new Christian religion that comes into existence in this era of highly educated believers must be able to hold up under examination and scrutiny to provide a system of beliefs that offer the hope of being everlasting. To do that, it must be wholly consistent, reflecting the wholeness and Oneness of The Creator. Its theology, fundamental beliefs, doctrines, and all related instructional materials must have their very beginnings in the roots of the One, beginning *before* creation. Any contradiction must be resolved. Yet, unresolved issues will always exist that provide the frontier of belief for an evolving religion.

To sustain themselves, God-centered religions must evolve to serve the evolving, growing spiritual needs of believers. To evolve this year, next year, or four centuries from now, it must have a set of values that will permeate its history and carry it into its future. That does not mean the underlying theology and God's relationship to the believer changes, but that the interpretation of the basic values evolves to serve the evolving social, political, economic, and spiritual needs of their audiences.

While the values that are organic to our species provide for a socially sustaining Christian morality to sustain a loving relationship between the individual believer and God, and with all others, it is helpful to also come to some common understandings or doctrines. Consider the following:

1. **The Doctrine of Innocence:** All children are born morally perfect and without humanly defined sin.
2. **The Doctrine of Fallibility:** All human children grow from the perfect state of innocence to the point where they will make their first moral decision. It is eventual that children who have reached this age will make a fallible moral decision.
3. **The Doctrine of Perfection:** Having made a fallible moral decision, it is our option to decide and then take action to strive to become perfect once again. Having made this decision and taken action, our Divine Fragment will do what we allow it to do to help. God's Divine Fragment will give us options so we may choose the right action for us individually for our growth.
4. **The Doctrine of Separation:** God, being perfectly loving and having given sovereignty to the will-decisions of human beings, has provided that those who do not wish to participate in their plan of life and spiritual ascendancy are allowed to pass out of existence as though they never were.
5. **The Doctrine of Wholeness:** The universe and its function are whole and unified. All aspects of universe-function operate in oneness where any one aspect affects the rest, and the whole has an effect upon the single aspect. (The universe does not exhibit "fracturing," where parts operate distinctly from the whole. Only beings with self-will who choose to live outside of wholeness exhibit "fracturing.")
6. **The Doctrine of Flow:** All aspects that exist in alignment with the greater universe "flow" in agreement with the universe. "Good" (divine order, divine timing, divine serendipity, and coincidence) is evidence of being in the flow of the universe. The greater our alignment, the greater we are in agreement with the flow of the universe.
7. **The Doctrine of Conscious Participation:** The rate of development and evolution of our ascendant spiritual career is immensely increased when we consciously participate by making appropriate and timely conscious decisions and taking similar

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action that are in alignment with the nature of God. Our rate of growth is further augmented when we consciously choose to establish and maintain a co-creative relationship with our Divine Fragment.



Addendum

HUMAN MOTIVATION —

The three primary values of our species have sustained us for over 200,000 years, approximately. Together, these values provide for an *interpretation of human motivation* that is species-wide for all people of all races, cultures, ethnic groups, nations, and genders, in simple and complex societies, now and into the far distant future. All of life is defined by the decisions we make based on the innate values system of our species and the interpretations we give to them according to our personal preferences.

The UNSustainability of Organizations. It is important to appreciate that while these values have sustained our species for tens of thousands of years, they are not innate to organizations. The archeological detritus of the social history of humankind provides clear evidence that all empires, dynasties, kingdoms, and nations large and small have all failed to sustain themselves.¹⁰ What will provide organizations with the capability of ongoing social sustainability to avoid their decline and collapse and that of their host societies is making decisions based on the same values that have sustained our species. Doing so will add sustainable value to the present and future circumstances of our personal lives, families, and the organizations of the society and nation we live in.

THE RAPHAEL UNIFIED THEORY OF HUMAN MOTIVATION (RUTHM) —

Together, these seven values provide us with a *unified, values-based theory of human motivation*. Eponymously, it becomes the *Raphael Unified Theory of Human Motivation, or RUTHM*.

The closest reference to a values-based theory of human motivation that I could find in an extensive Internet search was *An Overview of the Schwartz*

¹⁰ Diamond, Jared 2005. *Collapse – How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Viking, Penguin Group, New York

Theory of Basic Values, by Shalom H. Schwartz¹¹. Schwartz lists ten values: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. There is no dispute with these values, as secondary or tertiary interpreted-values subordinate to the three primary values. They have supported great contributions to the sustainability of our species by many individuals. Schwarz's theory was published after Dr. David L. Forbes' paper, "Toward a Unified Model of Human Motivation,"¹² that examined all major theories of human motivation, and not included.

A Unified Theory of Human Motivation. The unity of the primary and secondary value systems gives us a complete picture of human motivation and an accurate reflection of us as individuals — thinking and compassionate. The three primary values and the three secondary value-emotions bring us full circle to provide the basis for a unified theory of human motivation by engaging the analytical -side of individual and social existence with the intuitive or heart-connected side of our existence.

We are motivated by our intellectual side to devise ways to improve our quality of life, whether that means discovering fire to heat our cave and cook our food to inventing the latest smart phone. We are also mightily motivated by what we feel from what most people call their "heart." The secondary value-emotions give each of us the capability to improve the quality of our lives through our empathy, compassion, and "love" of humanity, both as givers to others and as receivers from others.

Further, these values give us the capability of improving the quality of our lives through our *intra-personal* relationship with our self; and inter-personal relationship with others. This is the point that the unification of these two value systems becomes vastly important to motivate each of us to explore our innate potential and find meaning in our life, to confidently unlock our potential, and to aid others unlock their own. The three secondary values connect us to others through our empathy to act in compassion to aid those in distress. In doing so, these values fully reflect what we are in being human. Peace will never become possible until we become fully human in our intra- and inter- relationships.

¹¹ Schwartz, S. H. (2012). An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1116>

¹² Review of General Psychology © American Psychological Association 2011, Vol. 15, No.2, 85-98 1089-2680/11/\$12.00 DOI; 10.1037/a0023483

These seven values have provided the motivating impetus to sustain of our species for 8,000 generations, approximately, and characterize our species as being human, humane. In other terms, the three primary values give us an integrated system of moral justice; and the three secondary values give us an integrated system of *humane* justice. The three secondary Value-Emotions give us the criteria to live our lives humanely in grace, to protect and nurture our self while we protect and nurture others.

Adapting to Changing Conditions. While the three primary values have sustained our species, the three secondary values give us the conscious capability to peacefully adapt to a world that is becoming more and more populated. *The key words here are “conscious” and “adapt.”* As a species we have unconsciously relied upon the three primary values to urge every person to yearn for a better quality of life, to grow into their potential, and to do so equally as anyone else. The three secondary values, however, are volitional, meaning that they come into operation unconsciously and consciously.

As our societies become more and more complex and populated, the more that we will need to become more conscious of invoking and implementing the three secondary values that make us human — humane. Otherwise our developed societies will not survive, regardless of whether they are democratic or totalitarian.

It seems that many people today fear what the future will bring to their lives. For some, this awareness is much like an incessant alarm clock trying to awaken us to the opportunity now to create a far more secure future. For yet fewer, we are actively designing a future that is far more friendly, and socially sustainable. And just a few actually do see the tendrils of social evolution reaching out to individuals and groups to create the first stages of that friendly future.

The future for such prescient individuals begins here, today, with like-minded progressive people. When the primary value Equality invokes our empathy we become aware of the equality of others that requires us to come to the conscious awareness (consciousness) to then act in compassion to come to the aid of others; or choose to ignore them. Which choice-decision-action is more human?

For societies, that consciousness must become awakened so that individual citizens and all citizens collectively choose to activate their sense of equality, compassion, and “love” of humanity to help others adapt to living more closely together. If we choose, consciously or unconsciously, not to apply the three secondary values at a societal level, then the three primary values will operate on their own, and this will maintain the ongoing ethnic, religious, political, and national competition for their selfish existence, to the detriment of everyone. Conflicts are no longer regional, but global. The way through this is to consciously engage our intuitive minds individually and collectively to choose to live without conflict, in peace — the organic state of human existence.

VALUES, VALUE-INTERPRETATIONS, HIERARCHIES OF NEED, and SOCIAL CHANGE —

Primary to understanding the necessity for the evolution of societies, democracies, politics, and economies is to understand the “original cause” of social change that is everywhere around us. Causes of the incessant social, political, and economic changes that erupted in the 1800s and 1900s are the same causes that push social change today — fueled by our individual yearning for a better *quality of life*, to *grow* into the innate potential that we brought into life, and to *equally* enjoy an improving quality of life and to grow into our innate potential as anyone else. Those values, today, as then, are always waiting for opportunities to come into expression.

The motive power behind SOCIAL change. What we define as social change is the collective movement of vast numbers of people who are striving to satisfy their evolving *personal interpretations* of the values that have sustained our species. Those *personal interpreted values* provide the basis for an evolving *hierarchy of needs* described by Dr. Abraham Maslow.

ABRAHAM MASLOW
HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Dr. Maslow stated that as basic human needs are fulfilled more evolved needs become apparent to form a hierarchy of needs. *Our hierarchy of needs evolve as our interpretations of our innate values evolve* — we are still using the same value system as our ancestors did tens of thousands of years ago, but we interpret them in new ways. Collectively, as individuals improve the quality of their life and grow into their innate potential as others do, they create social change through their “demand” for new avenues and new means to fulfill their evolving needs. Perceptive marketers strive to be in touch and in tune with the “demand” of the public to assess any changes in the market for the potential of new services and products.

While individual interpretations of the three primary values of social sustainability may vary wildly from one person to the next, vast numbers of people provide slow-moving, ongoing trends that stabilize the movement of a society over time. *Social instability occurs* when vast numbers of people sense that their ability to satisfy their needs is being threatened; and occurs rapidly and violently when they simultaneously sense that their ability is imminently threatened and there is no hope of preventing the threat.

"Everything is fine."¹³ It is not surprising that most people in mature democracies assume that "everything is fine." "Everything is fine" is *assumed* in the almost invisible slow creep of social change by most people who are easily distracted by the immediate events in their personal life. Yet in only five decades, the macro-scale of social change in the United States has been immense. Its only evidence is how uncomfortable citizens feel with "the way things are" in Washington, D.C., other national capitals, and in their state and provincial capitals. When large numbers of the public sense and wake up and see that everything is NOT FINE, then social, political, and economic panic can cause rapid, large scale disruptions.

The motive power behind *POLITICAL* change. As vast numbers of the public sense that their current political processes do not support an improving quality of life for them, and do not promote the individual to grow into their potential, or support them to do both, those vast numbers become less and less satisfied with the status quo. In a democracy, citizens are used to exercising their right of self-determination in all things that affect them, including their government. They yearn for a return to the quality relationship their great grandparents had with their elected and appointed public executives.



¹³ Bohm, David 2004 *On Dialogue*: 68.

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Daniel Raphael is an independent and original thinker who is a Viet Nam veteran; with 18 years' experience working in adult felony criminal corrections; father of three and grandfather of three children; former volunteer fireman; small business owner, inventor, manufacturer of a household product; holistic life coach; author and publisher of several books, manuscripts, and numerous articles; professional psychic since 2005; principal of Daniel Raphael Consulting since 2003. Daniel has taught numerous social sustainability and spirituality classes and workshops nationally and internationally and is well prepared to enlighten and entertain you.

Remarkably, he has had a prescient sense of the future since his early childhood. These skills coupled with his deep meditation practices have enabled him to become an effective holistic life coach and spiritual counselor, and have given him insights into the lives of his clients; and, into macro perspectives of the world. These gifts have been useful to him to see the necessity of social sustainability.



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